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THE "FIFTH" AT
ST. JIM'S!

HERE'S A GRAND EXTRA-LONG SCHOOL STORY FEATURING—

Anybody—



As a general rule, every school-boy enjoys himself on Bonfire Night. But the "Fifth" at St. Jim's ends in a startling and dramatic fashion, with the shadow of disgrace and expulsion hovering over a certain junior in the Shell Form.

CHAPTER 1. Very Funny!

"**B**AI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was surprised. It was a mild November day, and the swell of St. Jim's was seated on one of the benches in the school Close, with his back to an ancient elm. On his elegant knees was a copy of the 1928 "Holiday Annual."

But Arthur Augustus was not reading at the moment. He had closed the volume, and was just leisurely and reflectively watching the world go by, so to speak.

There were plenty of fellows strolling about the Close, and three of them had suddenly halted just opposite to Arthur Augustus.

The three were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, of the New House Fourth, and Arthur Augustus gave them a polite and genial nod, expecting them either to stroll on, or to pause to pass the time of day, or discuss the weather, or footer, or the forthcoming Fifth of November celebrations.

But Figgins & Co. didn't; instead, they just stood and stared at Arthur Augustus—stared with a rather disturbing and solemn intentness.

Naturally, Arthur Augustus was surprised.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "What evah is the mattah, you fellows?"

No answer; only that solemn stare.

Arthur Augustus frowned, and jammed his eyeglass further into place as he subjected the three New House fellows to a suspicious scrutiny.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were notorious practical jokers. Moreover, they were the leaders of the New House juniors in the incessant warfare between School House and New House.

Hence the natural suspicions of Arthur Augustus.

"Weally, you fellows," he went on, slightly exasperated now, "pway do not look at me in such a widiculous mannah! If this is a sillay joke—"

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"Not at all!" said Figgins, speaking at last.

"Certainly not!" said Kerr gravely.

"Perish the thought!" added Fatty Wynn. "I think I've got him all right, Figgy—firmly fixed on my memory."

"Better walk round him, though," said Kerr, "to get a good view of him from the back."

"That's right," said Figgins seriously. "Must make a good job of him. Take a good look at his profile, claps. It's rather like a file, ain't it?"

"Is that his face?" asked Kerr solemnly.

"I believe so," replied Figgy. "It's rather an unpleasant ordeal having to study his face for so long; but it's in a good cause, and we really must get the face right."

The three New House fellows solemnly walked round Arthur Augustus—or, rather, round the tree against which he sat—their eyes fixed intently upon him.

Arthur Augustus fairly blinked at them in growing suspicion and wrath.

"Bai Jove! You sillay asses—"

"That should do," said Figgins, ignoring Arthur Augustus' remark. "We'd better make sure with a rough sketch, though."

"Much better," said Kerr.

Figgins calmly reached forward and took the "Holiday Annual" from the knee of Arthur Augustus. He took a pencil from his pocket, opened the fly-leaf of the volume, and started calmly to sketch the noble countenance of the swell of the Fourth.

At the same moment Fatty Wynn and Kerr started to do likewise on sheets torn from their pocket-books.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus watched the proceedings with an extraordinary expression on his face.

"You—you uttah wottahs!" he exploded at last. "What does this mean? Figgins, give me back my book at once, you wottah!"

"Just a sec, Gussy!" said Figgins anxiously. "We must get it right."

"Get what wight?" shouted Gussy.

"You, old chap," said Figgins serenely. "It wouldn't

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—TOM MERRY & CO., THE CHEERY CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!

-Seen Our Guy?

Martin Clifford

have been a bad idea to photograph you in various positions. Still, I fancy we'll make a job of it now."

"Job of what?" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Our guy, old chap!"

"Wha-at?"

"Our guy," explained Figgins sweetly. "You see, last year and the year before we had old Ratty for a guy; but this year we thought we'd have a change, so we've been hunting round for a suitable subject, and at last we've settled on it that you just fit the bill, Gussy!"

"You—you—"

"So now we're studying you," said Figgins. "Your face is going to be rather a problem, I'm afraid. It'll be a difficult matter to get a Guy Fawkes' mask anywhere that'll be anything like so striking as your face, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! You—you wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You—you—"

"Still, we'll do our best, old chap. I suppose you wouldn't care to sit as model for us while we make the guy?" inquired Figgins.

Like Brutus, George Figgins paused for a reply.

With a crimson face, Arthur Augustus strove to articulate a suitable answer.

"I—I—I—" he spluttered. "You—you—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. roared at the expression on Gussy's crimson features. It was too much for Arthur Augustus.

He substituted actions for words, and went for the humorous New House jokers with a rush.

"Look out! Yooodooop!"

Figgins yelled the warning, but it proved that he required the warning more than anyone else, for it was he whom the irate Arthur Augustus singled out for assault and battery.

Before the lanky leader of the New House could "look out," Arthur Augustus was upon him, and his fist smote George Figgins full on the nose.

It was a brief victory, however, for the next moment Arthur Augustus was grasped by three pairs of hands and smote the ground with a painful bump.

"Yawoooooh! Welease me, you wotten wuffians!" he roared. "Ow! Yow! Bai Jove, I will give you all a fearful—Yooodooop!"

Gussy's yell was smothered as George Figgins dragged up his jacket over his shoulders and face. Then, after he jammed Gussy's shining silk topper over his eyes, the New House Co. strolled away, Fatty Wynn and Kerr laughing, and Figgins grinning and rubbing his nose rather ruefully.

They left the hapless Gussy dancing about in a towering rage, as he struggled frantically with his squashed topper.

CHAPTER 2. Not So Funny!

"H A, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn and Kerr laughed.

George Figgins rubbed his nose and chuckled; he could not help chuckling, though his nose was a trifle too sore for him to raise a hearty laugh. Arthur Augustus had smitten hard, and Figgins was likely to feel the results of that.

Still, pulling the noble leg of Arthur Augustus always was entertaining.

"Dear old Gussy!" chuckled Figgins. "His knuckles are pretty hard, but his head's fearfully soft! I say, it wouldn't be a bad wheeze to make a guy of dear old Gussy, chaps! Not much time, but—"

"Rather hard lines on old Gussy!" said Fatty Wynn dubiously. "In any case—"

"Not at all," said Figgins, wrinkling his brows in deep thought. "All's fair in love and war, fathead! And just think how waxy the School House worms will be! Besides, the bounders are up to something for the Fifth, as it is—something up against us, I believe! Glyn—"

"That's where they score," growled Kerr, shaking his head. "I only wish we had a chap like Glyn in the New House. He's jolly clever, and he's making a guy of some sort, I know."

"Perhaps of one of us chaps," said Figgins. "That's just what I'm afraid of, and why I think we ought to checkmate the cads with a guy of one of them. And who else is as easy as Gussy to copy?"

"We couldn't do it like Glyn can," said Kerr. "He's making a waxwork model of somebody at the school right enough. I heard Trimble gassing about it. I believe it's jolly good, though that ass Glyn only laughed when I asked him this morning who it's to be."

"He did when I asked him," said Figgins grimly. "I don't like it, chaps, and I vote we make a guy of one of them, in any case. They won't be able to crow then."

"Good idea! But how are we going to make a giddy Guy Fawkes' mask look like Gussy?" demanded Kerr. "We're not expert wax-modellers like Glyn. Besides, there isn't time now, Figgy. We should have thought of it earlier."

It had been known over in the New House for some days that Bernard Glyn, the schoolboy inventor of the School House Shell, was working hard making fireworks, and also a guy, an extra-special guy, with a wonderfully lifelike head worked in wax. The knowledge was gall and wormwood to the heroes of the New House, the more so because all their efforts to discover who the guy was to represent had failed. They naturally wondered whether it would be some New House fellow. Indeed, the lanky George Figgins felt a terrible dread that it might be himself.

"But, anyhow, we'll try to collar their giddy guy!" said Figgins darkly. "I've not given up hope of collaring it yet. Even if it isn't one of us, it'll be a great score to pinch it and burn the blessed thing ourselves—what?"

"Ripping! But—"

"Shush!" murmured Kerr, interrupting Fatty Wynn. "Here come those Shell asses. Let's pull their giddy legs like we did Gussy's."

"Good wheeze!"

Figgy grinned at the suggestion. He was always ready enough to pull School House legs, whoever they belonged to.

Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Manners came strolling along the gravel path. They gave the three New House juniors grinning nods.

"Top of the morning, Figgy!" said Tom Merry cheerily.

"You're rather early with them, aren't you?"

"Eh? With what?" said Figgins, rather taken aback.

"With the masks," said Tom blandly.

"Masks? What—"

"My hat, no!" said Tom Merry, pretending to look closer at the faces of Figgins & Co. "Now I come to look, I see they're your faces, after all. Sorry! I thought they were Guy Fawkes' masks."

"Why, you—you—" gasped Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

"You—you asses!" gasped Figgins. It was rather a bad start to his "leg-pulling" intentions. "You—you cheeky worms!"

"Well, if you will walk about with faces like that—"

"Oh, chuck it!" growled Figgins. "I say, you're just the fellows I was looking for."

"Go hon! Well, your search is ended—here we are!"

"We—we—" Figgins hesitated. The Terrible Three's opening remarks had rather taken the wind out of his sails. "We wanted you fellows to come up to our study for a bit."

"Will you walk into my parlour said the spider to the fly!" sang Lowther.

"You—you silly chump!" snorted Figgins. "I mean it. We'd like you to come. It's rather an important matter," he added, gaining his sang-froid a little. "We need them badly—don't we, you fellows?"

"Awfully badly!" agreed Fatty Wynn.

"Can't manage without them!" added Kerr.

"Unless they let us have some photographs of themselves," said Figgins, shaking his head. "Though they

wouldn't be much good unless they were taken from all angles. I think they'd better come up and let us sketch 'em, after all."

"What the (hump——" began Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three stared at the three solemn New House juniors.

"Pottier than ever," said Monty Lowther sadly. "I had hoped that, with time, the little fellows would improve. But they get worse and worse. I'm afraid it'll end in strait-waistcoats and padded cells for 'em!"

"Very sad!" grinned Manners. "I've seen it coming on for a long time."

"What's their little game, anyway?" said Tom Merry, eyeing Figgins & Co. suspiciously. "You say you want us to come to your study to be sketched, Figgy?"

"Yes; most important," said Figgins.

Tom winked at the sky and shook his head.

"Can't be did, old son," he said blandly. "But I tell you what. If you're looking for three guys for the Fifth, I can put you on to three—the biggest freaks at St. Jim's, with faces like gargoyles, only more so."

"Look here——"

"One has got sandy hair and a face like a monkey," said Tom, looking hard at Francis Kerr; "the other's long and lanky, with legs like broomsticks and a face like a rake," he continued, transferring his gaze to Figgins; "and the other's a human barrel of lard, with a face like a doughnut!" he ended, turning his bland look upon Fatty Wynn.

"Why, you cheeky cad," spluttered Figgins. "I'll——"

"If you want to see the three guys," said Tom cheerfully, "just go home and look in the looking-glass. Then get your New House pals to rope you up in chairs, and you won't need any disguises then to make you into three ripping guys—see?"

"You—you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther and Manners.

Figgins glared; his chums, Fatty Wynn and Kerr, did likewise. Their little bit of leg-pulling had failed to come off. Unlike the innocent and trusting Gussy, Tom Merry had obviously tumbled.

"You—you silly chumps!" gasped Figgins wrathfully. "Why, I'll—I'll smash you, you cheeky set of asses! Go for 'em, chaps!"

"Come on!" invited Tom Merry cheerfully.

Figgins & Co. came on quickly enough. It never needed much to bring about a scrap between the rival juniors, and the Terrible Three were ready, and more than willing. Moreover, they had just sighted Blake, Herries, and Digby coming up the gravel path behind the New House juniors—a little fact of which Figgins & Co. were quite unaware.

As they rushed to the attack Tom Merry & Co. did not trouble to put up their fists. Tom just grabbed the infuriated Figgy round the waist and held him, and his two chums did likewise with Fatty Wynn and Kerr.

The next moment there was a patter of feet on the gravel, and Blake, Herries, and Digby dashed up.

"Just in time—what?" grinned Blake. "What's the trouble, Tommy?"

"Cheek and trying to pull our august legs!" said Tom Merry.

"Can't have that," said Blake, shaking his head. "New House worms must be taught to be respectful and humble to their betters. I vote we duck them in the fountain."

"Good wheeze!" chuckled Tom. "Figgy certainly does need cooling down a little."

"You School House cads!" roared Figgins, struggling furiously. "Keep off, Blake, you rotter! Man to man, not two to one!"

"My dear chap," said Tom Merry soothingly, "this is not a vulgar scrap; it's just a lesson in discipline. Bring—Hullo! What's the matter with Gussy?"

Just then Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came hurrying up, his noble features red and wrathful, his hair ruffled, and his damaged topper in his hand.

"Bai Jove! Hold them, you fellows!" he gasped wrathfully. "I am goin' to give them each a fearful thwashin', you know."

"Why, what——"

"They have tweated me with gwoss diswespect and wuffianly wudeness!" shouted Arthur Augustus furiously. "They have stated their intention of makin' a wotten guy of me, and have also wumped my clobber and wuined my toppah. I am goin' to administrah a thwashin' all round!"

"Can't be did, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "You might get three thrashings instead, and that wouldn't do at all."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"But you can help us duck the little fellows," said Tom, with a chuckle. "Bring them along, chaps!"

"What-ho!"

"Leggo!" roared Figgins, struggling furiously. "You dare——"

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But the School House juniors did dare. Despite their desperate struggles and fearful threats, Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were dragged across the grass to the fountain. There was a few seconds' desperate struggling on the stone edging, and then three ruffled heads with crimson faces were plunged into the water, their yells ending in sudden gurgles.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Yelling with laughter, the School House juniors walked away, leaving the hapless New House jokers spluttering and gasping, with water streaming from their drenched hair and crimson faces. They had very good reason to regret having attempted to "guy" Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 3.

Getting Ready for the Fifth!

THE Fifth of November was always a great day at St. Jim's, celebrated in fine style with bonfire and fireworks, and heaps of fun, especially between the rival Houses.

And, of course, there was a guy, or rather, two guys—usually one from each House. And usually these were effigies of someone at St. Jim's who was unpopular—either master or prefect.

Mr. Ratcliff, the unpopular Housemaster of the New House, had had his turn, as had Mr. Selby, the unpopular master of the Third. But—very fortunately for the makers of the effigy—their supposed identity had not been discernible, and only the daring makers knew whom they were supposed to resemble.

There would certainly have been very serious trouble had the victims, or the authorities, known.

But this year it was rumoured that something especially unusual was afoot in the Lower School. It was generally known that Bernard Glyn, the inventive genius of the Shell, was at work on a guy, and this had aroused a great deal of interest and speculation. If Bernard Glyn was making a guy, then it was bound to be something extra special, and worthy of the inventive genius of St. Jim's.

Only a select few in the Shell and Fourth, apparently, knew what it was, however. And they were certainly keeping it very dark, while Glyn was working behind that locked door of his study.

But Figgins & Co. had heard the rumour, and naturally the very fact of the identity of the guy being kept a close secret was making them very suspicious—very suspicious indeed. Of late the rivalry between New House and School House had been intense, and Figgins & Co. had a growing and uneasy fear that the special guy was to be an effigy of one of themselves.

Actually, such was not the case at all. To make a guy of anyone from the New House—unless it was Horace Ratcliff, M.A., had not occurred to the School House fellows. The guy Glyn and his helpers were really making was an effigy of Gerald Knox, the unpopular prefect of the School House. It was not the first time Knox had been "guyed," by any means. But of late Knox had been especially "obnoxious," as Lowther put it, and it had been decided that no better victim could be chosen.

And as Glyn intended it to be a perfect likeness of Gerald Knox, all had agreed that the strictest secrecy was essential until bonfire night arrived. Then Gerald Knox should see for himself what the juniors and fags of the School House thought of him, and perhaps the sight of his effigy being burned amid derision and joy might, perhaps, cause the hated prefect to change his ways.

That was the hope and intention of Tom Merry & Co. and Glyn & Co., for it was the Terrible Three who had thought of the idea, and Glyn had been entrusted with the task—a task only too pleasant to the enthusiastic genius of the Shell. He devoted every spare minute to the task, and already it was practically finished save for small details.

Of all this Figgins & Co. were blissfully unaware, and they put quite a wrong construction on the secrecy and subdued excitement, feeling quite certain that the guy was "up against" them. Indeed, George Figgins had a strong suspicion that the effigy was of himself, a fact which was an endless source of amusement to the School House conspirators.

"Poor old Figgy!" chuckled Tom Merry, as they walked away from the fountain after the ducking ceremony. "The silly ass has fairly got the pip over this guy of ours. He thinks it's of one of them."

"Let 'em go on thinking so," grinned Blake. "My hat, though, it wouldn't have been a bad wheeze to make one of them."

"It would be a lark!" admitted Tom Merry, nodding. "But it's too late now—no time to make one. Still, it'll be a score over those New House worms having made such

a ripping guy. They'll be nearly green with envy when they see it. I say, let's go and see how it's getting on."

"Good idea!"

The School House juniors went indoors to visit Glyn—at least, all did excepting Arthur Augustus, who hurried away, still wrathful, to change his rumpled "clobber" and clean himself up.

They found Glyn's study door locked, and Tom Merry chuckled and rapped sharply on it.

"Go away!" came Glyn's voice from inside. "Clear off, you worrying asses!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Apparently Glyn was slightly irritated at the interruption.

"It's all right, Glyn!" called Tom Merry. "It's only little us!"

"Oh!"

Glyn unlocked the door, and after making sure it was Tom Merry, he grunted and allowed them to enter, closing and locking the door after them.

"Come to help? Good!" he said, wiping his perspiring brow. "I'm fed-up with silly asses coming bothering me, but as you fellows have come to help, it's a different matter. Get your coats off and pile in."

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry & Co. grinned and looked round the study. Harry Noble and Clifton Dane were in the study with Glyn, both of them with their coats off and sleeves rolled up. As a general rule Glyn's chums gave the study a wide berth when their inventive study-mate was at work on his weird experiments. But for once they had willingly agreed to help. Making fireworks—especially making a guy of Knox of the Sixth—was a job with its interesting side, and they were quite enjoying themselves.

All three were almost as black as sweeps, and the study was in a most fearful state. Glyn's study usually was a sight—conglomerations of weird apparatus, tubes and jars of evil-looking and worse-smelling liquids, labyrinths of wires and tools of all kinds spread about in confusion. But just now it looked worse than ever. Sheets and scraps of cardboard, wooden laths, blue touch-paper, bottles of paste—all sorts of stuff used for making fireworks were strewn about the floor, table, chairs, and even the mantelpiece, while wax seemed to be everywhere, and the whole room smelled strongly of gunpowder and chemicals.

On the table was a big pile of finished fireworks, whilst on a chair was a neat pile of cardboard boxes and another small pile of small biscuit tins, apparently also containing fireworks.

"Phew! What a giddy sight!" chuckled Lowther.

Dane, who was busy making tubes and cases, whilst Noble filled them with powder, gave them a grin.

"Come on! We need all the giddy help we can get," he said briskly. "Pile in, you fellows!"

"How are things going?" asked Tom.

"Ripping! Plenty of rockets, Roman candles, squibs—every giddy firework made, and lots of Glyn's own designs," said Noble enthusiastically. "But there's plenty of stuff for more. Pile in, chaps!"

"I mean how's the waxwork figure going?" said Tom, lowering his voice.

"Great!" chuckled Clifton Dane. "Show 'em, Glyn. It's dear old Knox to the life!"

"Yes, rather!" said Noble. "How Glyn does it beats me. It's a giddy work of art."

Glyn smiled modestly, and after making quite sure the door was locked safely, he stooped and dragged carefully from under the study couch something covered in a sheet.

He removed the sheet, and then with Dane's help he raised the figure disclosed to view into an upright position.

Tom Merry & Co. fairly jumped as they looked at it.

They had seen the waxwork face of the effigy several times in the course of its construction, and they had also seen the body in its unclothed state.

But now they saw it clothed and with the wax face cleverly touched up. It was Knox to the life—even to an old suit of Knox's which Glyn had coolly purloined from somewhere. Knox's thin, sharp features were there, his spiteful, sarcastic curl of the lip, his thin, tight mouth and sallow complexion.

"Mum-my hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Phew!" ejaculated Lowther. "It's Knox' twin. Only wants a cigarette in its mouth—"

"And a giddy racing-paper in its hand," grinned Blake. "My only hat! It's great!"

"I thought you fellows would be satisfied," said Glyn, his face showing his pride and satisfaction. "It only needs a few touches now. And I'll see it gets a cigarette; it wouldn't be Knox without. But we've got to be careful, chaps. I believe Knox suspects something already. I've seen him looking at me jolly queerly."

"Better keep it somewhere else now it's practically finished," said Tom Merry, eyeing the effigy in great admiration. "I suggest that—Hullo! What the—"

Tom and his chums stared blankly as Glyn unfastened the coat and waistcoat of Knox the Second. Then he opened a little sort of door in the chest of the dummy figure.

"What's that for?" ejaculated Blake.

"A giddy gramophone, I bet!" opined Lowther.

"Not at all!" said Glyn, with a chuckle. "That's going to be filled with giddy fireworks—some special brand of my own invention. They'll be all fixed together and attached to a special electric-timed detonator. You can guess what'll happen when that goes off. This isn't a common or garden guy!"

"Oh crumbs! Rather not!"

"I've also invented some other little gadgets," grinned Glyn, helping Noble and Dane to rest Knox the Second on the study couch. "Look at these."

Glyn picked up one of the cardboard chocolate-boxes and one of the biscuit-tins.

"These are to be wrapped nicely in paper and sent as presents to certain persons we select for the honour—New House bouncers, for instance. They each contain either smoke-bombs or crackers, and when they're opened they—well, you can imagine the rest!"

"Phew! Ripping!"

"You're a giddy genius, Glyn!" said Blake admiringly. "Figgy must have one of those, of course, and there's Cutts of the Fifth and lots of other fellows we'd like to give presents like those to."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Hullo! There's Knox now!" said Lowther.

He had happened to glance out of the window, and he saw Knox of the Sixth standing on the gravel path below in the quad, talking to Cutts of the Fifth.

"Talk of angels!" murmured Lowther. "My hat! Here's a giddy chance to remind Knox it's near the Fifth. Hold on!"

For a moment Lowther watched the two seniors with a glimmer in his eyes, and then he grabbed up one of the fireworks from the table, and jumped to the door. He unlocked it, and was outside before anyone else could guess his intention.

"Here, come back!" yelled Glyn.

"Monty, you ass!" called Tom Merry, in alarm.

Tom jumped to the door and looked out. Lowther was a great practical joker, but very often he never looked before he leaped.

"Shut that blessed door," snorted Glyn, "and let the ass go! If he wants to play the fool with that cracker, let him—so long as he doesn't attract attention to this dashed study!"

"Oh, all right!" grinned Tom.

He had seen no sign of Lowther in the corridor outside, and he hurried across to the window, after closing and locking the door again. Blake and the others joined him there, guessing that Lowther intended to go down into the quad to play some trick on Knox and Cutts with the cracker—if cracker it was!

But they were wrong.

As they looked out of the open window Tom Merry gasped as he saw a head and shoulders appear out of a window farther along from theirs. It was the landing-window at the end of the Shell passage, and it was just below this that Knox and Cutts were standing chatting.

They could not see the face of the owner of the head and shoulders—simply because it was hidden behind a grotesque Guy Fawkes' mask!

But they guessed it was Monty Lowther, and they saw his game now.

"Oh, my hat!" chuckled Blake. "He's got a mask on!"

"It's one he bought this morning," grinned Manners. "Monty bought it himself. Said he'd be able to tell Knox just what he thought of him in safety with that on."

"That's his game now!" grinned Tom Merry. "Hullo! Now for it!"

Breathlessly the grinning juniors watched as Lowther's arm came out of the window. In his hand was the firework, and at the blue-coloured end a spark glowed.

Then Lowther dropped it.

It dropped, spluttered softly just a foot or so behind the unconscious Knox, and then—

Bang!

CHAPTER 4.

Alarming!

BANG! The cracker was a big one, and the bang was a big bang. It made Gerald Knox leap almost from his skin—and Gerald Cutts likewise.

And as Knox jumped a couple of feet into the air one of his boots caught Cutts a fearful crack on his shin.

"Yoooooop!"

Bang, bang, bang!

The cracker, besides being a big cracker, was of the jumping variety.

It jumped and banged viciously round the legs of the startled seniors as if it was a snappy terrier round their elegant calves.

"What—what— Good gad!"

Knox skipped about, scarcely aware of what had happened. Cutts could only follow his example to avoid Glyn's jumping cracker, his face black with rage—for Cutts, at least, had seen where the cracker came from.

Bang! Zipp! Bang!

With a final bang the cracker burst into a myriad multi-coloured sparks, and spluttered out. As it did so, a yell came from above the seniors' heads.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What—what—" gasped Knox, his voice trembling. "Oh! Why, it—it's—"

"It's a dashed firework, of course!" howled Cutts furiously, hugging his shin and hopping about. "Can't you see? It's that young fiend up there at the landing-window!"

Knox looked up, and his face grew savage as he sighted the masked face staring down from the passage-window above his head. Then he saw the laughing juniors at Glyn's window, and he shook his fist at them.

"It wasn't them!" snorted Cutts furiously. "It was that young rotter in the mask! I saw him just as he threw it!"

"Right on the nail, old top!" called Monty Lowther, taking care to disguise his voice, however. "How did you like the big bang, Knoxy dear?"

"You—you young villain!" shouted Knox. "Take that dashed mask off at once!"

"Rats!"

"What?"

"Rats!" said Lowther cheerfully. "Likewise cats and mice. You can go and eat coke, Knoxy!"

"You—you cheeky young scoundrel!"

"Thanks! And you're a cheeky old scoundrel!" said Lowther, quite enjoying the chance to tell Knox what he thought of him. "You're also a bullying cad and a sneaking worm!"

"What? You—you dare—"

"And a stuck-up snob!" went on Lowther. "You're a disgrace to the School House! You can go and eat coke and chop chips, Knoxy!"

"Why, you—you young scoundrel! Come down at once!" gasped the astounded prefect. "You dare to talk to me like that? I—I know who you are—"

"Liar!"

"What?"

Knox glared speechlessly up at the masked joker, and then, with a furious exclamation, he started off at a run for the School House doorway. Lowther promptly vanished from the window.

"Oh, the awful ass!" gasped Tom Merry, too scared at Lowther's reckless daring to laugh now. "Hallo! Here comes the ass! Better let him in, or Knox'll smell a rat if he sees him about alone."

There came a hurried knock at the door, and, despite Glyn's frantic warning not to open it, Tom did so, and the grinning Lowther hopped inside, and Tom slammed and locked the door again.

"You—you burbling idiot!" hissed Glyn wrathfully. "Now that rotter will come here as sure as fate! Oh, you idiot, Lowther!"

"It's all right! He can't prove anything, if he does suspect!" grinned Lowther breathlessly. "Just sit tight—"

"But what about the guy?" hissed Glyn. "Quick! We've got to hide it somehow. He already suspects something, and this will just give him an excuse to search my study. Oh, you—you ass, Lowther!"

"Here he comes!" groaned Tom Merry.

There was a sudden tramp of heavy footsteps in the passage outside. Then came a savage knock on the study door.

The juniors looked at each other in alarm now. True, the dummy could easily be hidden under the couch as before. But as Glyn had said the furious prefect—already guessing that Glyn & Co. were planning something against him—would be only too glad of an excuse to search the study. He had seen them at the window laughing, and he would undoubtedly connect the masked figure at the landing-window with them.

"Hold on!" whispered Noble. "Keep the door locked for a bit, chaps."

He hurried over to the open window again and looked out. Cutts had gone—evidently after Knox, indoors—and the only fellow in sight in that corner of the quad was Skimpole of the Shell, who didn't matter.

"Quick!" breathed Noble. "I've got it. Wrap him up, tie that cord round him, and lower him through the window until—"

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"You silly ass! Think I want him smashed?" snorted Glyn.

"Only till Knox goes," said Noble witheringly. "We'll tie the cord somehow inside."

"Good wheeze!" murmured Tom Merry and Blake together.

And, ignoring Glyn's views in the matter, they grabbed the sheet and helped Noble to roll Knox the Second in it. The idea was certainly risky, but the risk had to be taken. If Knox found that effigy in the study the fat would be in the fire with a vengeance. Making guys of those in authority at St. Jim's—even a prefect—would mean trouble for those concerned.

So Tom Merry & Co. took the risk; there seemed nothing else for it.

The guy was swiftly wrapped up and the cord tied round it just as swiftly, and then Knox the Second was gently lowered through the window. Then the cord was tied to a large hook on the sill, and a jacket thrown carelessly over it to hide the cord.

By this time Knox was thundering at the door furiously.

"Do you hear?" he stormed. "Open this door at once, you young scoundrels! If you don't open it I shall fetch Mr. Railton!"

Glyn unlocked the door and opened it. Knox stood there with Cutts at his heels and quite a crowd of fellows behind them in the passage, many of them not a little scared.

"What's the matter, Knox?" asked Glyn innocently.

"We're busy making fireworks."

"Why didn't you open the door at once?" hooted Knox.

"How did we know it was you?" said Tom Merry mildly.

"We were busy, and didn't want to be interrupted."

"You can't put me off with that yarn," said Knox, glaring round him. "You were at the window just now and saw what happened. One of you threw a cracker from the landing window at Cutts and myself. You also insulted me—a prefect! I'm going to find out who did it and take him to Mr. Railton."

"We saw the chap do it right enough," said Blake, shaking his head. "But he wore a mask, and nobody could have told who he was. The blessed cracker wasn't thrown from this room, anyway."

"I know it wasn't!" shouted Knox, his face crimson with rage. "But I know it was one of you kids, anyway, and I'm going to find that mask. It's somewhere in here, anyway."

And with that Gerald Knox started his search, as the juniors fully expected him to. He looked under the table, in the drawers, in cupboards, and under the couch. He even looked in the firegrate, though the juniors suspected he was hoping to find something else in addition to the mask.

Lowther watched him smilingly—having already burned the mask in the grate in Study No. 10. He felt that he had nothing to fear, at all events.

"Finished?" asked Glyn blandly at last.

"You—you little sweeps!" hissed Knox, giving it up at last, with a red, disappointed face. "I know it was one of you sweeps, though, and I'll find him yet! What's all this muck doing in here?"

"We're making fireworks," said Glyn. "Mr. Railton gave us permission. But if you really don't approve—"

"I want no cheek!" stormed Knox. "Take a hundred lines for impudence, Glyn!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"That dashed mask is in here somewhere!" said Knox through his teeth. "I'm going to search each of you. Open your confounded jackets and—"

Knox was interrupted just then. There was a confused sound of excited voices in the passage outside, and then a sharp, authoritative knock came to the door. Then it opened, and in the doorway stood little Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth. Behind him was Kildare and Darrell and a little crowd; some of them grinning, some of them looking scared.

Mr. Lathom's face was white, and he appeared to be very distressed indeed. But as he looked into the study he fairly jumped.

"What—what— Good gracious!"

The little master stuttered out the words and eyed Gerald Knox in astounded amazement. Then he gave a deep gasp of relief.

"Bless my soul! Knox—Knox, you are here! You—you are here safe after all! What—what—"

Knox blinked at him.

"What's the matter, sir?" he grunted. "I was just—"

"Matter?" gasped Mr. Lathom, who appeared to be quite dazed and staggered. "You may well ask that question, Knox. I—I— Bless my soul! This is most astounding. But—but I am relieved—more relieved than I can say, Knox, to find you here, unharmed. I—I thought—"

"Of course I'm all right!" said Knox surlily. "These

young rascals played a trick on me—a trick with a cracker.

"I know nothing of that, Knox," said Mr. Lathom, still blinking through his spectacles almost unbelievably at Knox. "I only know that I have had a severe shock. I thought—I feared that something terrible had happened to you, my boy. But—but—"

Mr. Lathom paused, and his anxious face became grim.

"I have been given a very severe shock," he went on, his kindly features becoming wrathful now. "But it is obvious to me now that I was merely a piece of idiotic buffoonery on your part, Knox."

"Wha-a-at?" stuttered Knox.

"An idiotic joke on your part!" thundered Mr. Lathom. "I am surprised, amazed, that a senior of your position should play such an utterly absurd trick!"

"Mum-me, sir?"

"Yes. It is quite obvious to me now. A moment or two ago," said Mr. Lathom, trembling in his indignation, "I happened to walk into the quadrangle when a strange and startling sight attracted my attention. It appeared to be a bulky object wrapped in a sheet, but owing to my shortness of sight I was unable to determine what it was. I, therefore, approached closer, and to my horror—to my utter horror and alarm—I saw that it contained what I believed at the moment to be a—a body!"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Glyn, under his breath. "That's done it!"

It certainly seemed as if it had, and Tom Merry & Co. trembled.

"I was naturally shocked beyond measure," went on the Fourth Form master, glowering at the amazed Knox. "And especially was I shocked when I saw that the top of the sheet had fallen away and that the face of the form in the sheet was your face, Knox."

"Mum-mine?" stuttered Knox, staring at Mr. Lathom as though he had doubts of his sanity.

"Yes—yours, sir!" stormed Mr. Lathom. "You were hanging from the window of this room, wrapped in a sheet, at the end of a rope! It did not occur to me that you, a senior, could be guilty of such stupid, idiotic buffoonery. I was, therefore, given a severe shock, from which I have not yet recovered. I am disgusted with your idiotic conduct, Knox!"

"But—but, sir," gabbled Knox, "I know nothing about it! I—I don't understand you! I assure you that you have made a mistake, sir."

"One moment," said Kildare, coming forward suddenly, his face rather grim. "Perhaps someone else has been playing a practical joke, sir. You saw a figure hanging from this study window, wrapped in a sheet, sir?"

"Most assuredly I did, Kildare! I was—"

"Then perhaps it will be as well to look out of the window," said Kildare dryly, giving the suddenly startled juniors a grim glance.

And with that the captain of St. Jim's stepped to the window and looked out.

Glyn & Co. gave a simultaneous gasp. Tom Merry & Co. did likewise. They exchanged hopeless looks.

It was all up now. Another moment—

Kildare looked up and he looked down; he looked to right and left, and he looked round about. Then he withdrew his head, looking puzzled.

"Nothing there, sir," he reported. "I can't quite make this business out."

Nor could the guilty conspirators, for that matter!

"N-nothing there!" gulped Glyn involuntarily.

He stepped to the window and looked out; the other

juniors joined him instantly, quite overlooking the need for caution in their amazement.

But that amazement was as nothing to what they felt as they looked out.

For there was nothing there. The guy had gone!

"Oh!" gasped Glyn. "Oh, my hat!" Then he recovered himself swiftly. "I am sure you must have been mistaken in thinking Knox was hanging from this window, sir," he said meekly.

"I was not mistaken!" snapped Mr. Lathom. "How dare you suggest that, Glyn! I have no doubt whatever that Knox was acting thus to amuse you boys."

"But I wasn't!" almost shrieked Knox. "I don't know what you're talking about, sir. I—I—"



Breathlessly the grinning juniors watched, as Lowther's arm came out of the window. In his hand was a firework, which he dropped a foot behind the unconscious Knox. Bang, bang, bang! The two seniors leaped almost a couple of feet off the ground, as the cracker went off! (See Chapter 3.)

"That is enough!" said Mr. Lathom, raising a magisterial hand. "I am surprised and disgusted, Knox. I will say no more. I—I do not feel equal to discussing this wretched matter further."

With that Mr. Lathom gave Knox a glowering look and strode out of the room, the crowd round the doorway jumping away to make room for him. For once the good-natured master of the Fourth was much "put out," and certainly very angry indeed. He had seen what he had seen, and the only possible construction he could put on the matter was that Knox had been playing a silly, childish trick, either to frighten people or to amuse the juniors.

"The—the silly old fool!" gritted Knox, as he went. "I tell you, Kildare—"

"Better say no more about it!" said Kildare significantly. "No good making a fool of yourself, Knox! Somebody has been pulling your giddy leg—or Lathom's! Take my tip, and leave things as they are!"

And with that Kildare marched out, Darrell following him, a broad grin on his face.

Knox glared for a full minute at Glyn & Co. and Tom

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Merry & Co., and then he stamped from the room, many chuckles following him. But Bernard Glyn did not chuckle. He slammed the door after Knox, and then he went to the window again and looked out. Like Kildare, he looked up and down and round about. But the guy had undoubtedly vanished—vanished mysteriously into thin air, or so it seemed.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Glyn. "This beats the band!"
"Jolly funny, though!" grinned Blake. "What a scream! Dear old Lathom—"

"Funny!" hooted Glyn wrathfully. "But what about my guy? Days and days of hard work and pots of money wasted if that dashed guy's gone! I'm blessed if I can understand this! Oh, that awful fool Lowther! It was all— Why, where is the idiot?"

It was just then that the juniors made the surprising discovery that Monty Lowther was absent. But even as they made it the door was quietly opened, and Monty Lowther looked in, a cheery grin on his mischievous features.

"All clear?" he asked, looking round. "I say, what happened, you chaps?"

"Happened! Why, when the dickens did you go out?" demanded Tom Merry.

"When old Lathom came along!" said Lowther cheerily, closing the door behind him. "I saw that unless something was done, the fat would be in the fire, and so I got busy!"

"You—you—" gasped Glyn hopefully.

"Yes, all serene!" grinned Lowther. "I knew something had to be done quickly. I spotted that somebody would be bound to investigate Lathom's yarn and look out of the window—if Lathom himself didn't. And so I slipped into Study No. 10, shinned through the window, and crept along the stone ledge outside to this window. Then I ducked down, cut the cord, and—well, the giddy guy is safe enough now. It's hidden under the giddy couch in our study!"

"Oh!" gasped Glyn. "Oh, good egg!"

"But—but how did you manage it, Monty?" gasped Tom.
"Easy enough. It was not heavy, you know, and I got a good grip of the cord and edged my way back. Then I hauled it over the sill into our giddy study. Luckily, nobody saw me!"

"Phew!"

"What ripping luck!" breathed Glyn. "Let's go and fetch the dashed thing, for goodness' sake!"

"Don't be an ass!" said Lowther calmly. "Knox's still prowling about, looking like a demon! Either leave it there, or give him ten minutes to clear away."

"Better!" agreed Tom Merry. "No good risking anything, and it'll be safe enough in our study for a bit."

"Oh, all right!" grunted Bernard Glyn. "But the sooner it's in a safe place, the better. Won't be safe to have it in this study, either, after this. Knox will think things over, and he'll be more suspicious than ever now, even if he doesn't tumble."

"Yes, rather!"

And, having agreed upon that, the conspirators settled down to wait until the coast was clear, before attempting to smuggle the precious effigy from Study No. 10.

CHAPTER 5.

A Little Mistake!

"**N**OT heah, eithah, bai Jove!"
Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he looked in at the doorway of Study No. 10 on the Shell passage.

It was some time after the surprising events in Glyn's study, and Arthur Augustus found the Shell passage deserted as he came along. Since he had parted from his chums Arthur Augustus had been very busy. First of all, he had discovered that he had left his "Holiday Annual" on the bench in the Close, and even in his rumpled state Arthur Augustus valued the volume too much to leave it lying there.

So he went to fetch it, and, having put it safely away in Study No. 6, he then proceeded to the bath-room. Gussy did not really need a wash and brush up, but he felt he needed one, and he had one. Then he went up to the dormitory to change.

Actually Gussy did not really need a change, either, for his clothes were merely ruffled and a trifle dishevelled. No other fellow would have deemed it necessary to change.

But Arthur Augustus did; the noble swell of the Fourth was very particular indeed in such matters. And it was already very close on time for afternoon classes.

So Gussy changed, and then he walked leisurely along to Study No. 6, expecting to find his chums had returned from their visit to Glyn.

Not finding them there, Gussy then strolled along to

Study No. 10 in the Shell passage and looked in—only to find that empty also. Then it was Gussy had ejaculated:

"Not heah, eithah, bai Jove!"

Having made that discovery, Gussy paused reflectively. He guessed that his chums were still with Glyn, though he was quite ignorant of what had happened. But he did not want to visit Glyn's study—Arthur Augustus never did enjoy a visit to that celebrated apartment. He did not like the smells nor the untidiness. Moreover, he feared that Bernard Glyn might expect him to lend a hand with the fireworks—a job at thought of which the fastidious Gussy shuddered.

So Gussy paused, undecided, and as he paused his noble eye suddenly caught sight of something protruding from beneath the study couch.

It looked very curious to Arthur Augustus, and he jammed his celebrated monocle into place and looked at it. Then he closed the door quietly and stepped across to the couch.

He peeped underneath.

Then he jumped.

He had fancied that what he had seen from the doorway was the heel of a shoe protruding from beneath the couch. Now he saw that it was, and that it seemed to come from underneath a sheet or something.

"Oh, bai Jove!" ejaculated the startled swell of St. Jim's.

He looked closer, suddenly suspecting that somebody was hidden there for a joke. But it was dark under the couch, and Arthur Augustus groped underneath with his hand and felt cautiously.

He withdrew his hand suddenly, and almost shrieked. It had touched something strangely and dreadfully cold and smooth—but undoubtedly a face. He almost toppled backwards in his sudden fright.

But the next moment he recovered himself, realising that it could not possibly be what he had dreaded. He paused in indecision for a brief moment, and then he got up and moved the couch back slightly.

Then he saw it, and understood.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he gasped, in overwhelming relief. "It is Glyn's wretched dummey, I do believe! This is weally remarkable!"

Almost grinning in his relief, Arthur Augustus turned back the sheet, and then he saw that it was indeed Glyn's guy. Certainly it had not been anything like so lifelike when Gussy had seen it last, and the shock he had got was excusable. But it was undoubtedly Glyn's effigy of Gerald Knox of the Sixth.

"Bai Jove, it is weally a most astonishin' likeness!" murmured Gussy, gazing admiringly at it. "Weally, that fellow Glyn is a wearmarkably clevah fellow! I weally could not have made it bettah myself! But how feahfully careless to leave the thing heah! I am vevy much surprised at Glyn's carelessness!"

And Arthur Augustus shook his head. That any fellow might have entered the study and seen the shoe protruding as he had done was certainly very likely indeed. Lowther had certainly been careless in leaving it like that, though, naturally, knowing nothing of the circumstances, Arthur Augustus was blaming Glyn.

"He weally deserves to be taught a lesson, bai Jove!" murmured Gussy reflectively, shaking his head again. "Why, Knox or that wottah Wacke, or even Wailton, might easily have come in and seen it! I had bettah wemove it to a safah place myself. It will give Glyn watah a fright, too, and teach him to be more cautious! Yaas, watah!"

The idea struck Gussy as a good one. He really felt that Glyn deserved to be taught a lesson, and he certainly felt that the guy was not safe there.

But where to hide it—that was the problem. Gussy frowned and frowned in an effort to solve it. Then a brain-wave struck him.

"Bai Jove, I can hide it in the box-woom at the end of the passage! Vevy good! The vevy thing!"

And as he murmured the words, Arthur Augustus wrapped the guy up again in the sheet, tied round it the piece of cord he found hanging from the waist, and carried it to the door. Then he looked cautiously out.

At the moment the Shell passage was deserted, and, lifting up the guy, Gussy hurried out with it to the box-room at the end of the passage.

Luckily he reached it without incident, for it was only a few yards away, and, passing inside, he closed the door with one hand. Then he looked about him.

The box-room was rarely used, and it was almost empty. But an old cupboard stood in one corner with a rusty key in the lock.

The cupboard was empty save for a few old, musty exercise-books, and Arthur Augustus carefully lifted his burden inside. Then he closed and locked the door, placing the key in his pocket.

"That's all wight now," he said, with a chuckle. "Glyn will get watah a shock when he goes for his guy undah that

couch. It will be wathah funny to see his face when I tell him wheeah to find it aftahwards. Yaas, wathah!"

And with that reflection, Arthur Augustus chuckled and made his way back to Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage.

He had scarcely left the passage when Knox of the Sixth came along, his face showing the wrath that consumed him. He glared at the door of Glyn's study, hesitated outside a moment, and then, as if he had suddenly changed his mind, he walked on to Study No. 10, and looked inside.

Then he frowned on seeing the room empty.

But the next moment his eyes gleamed with sudden determination.

As a matter of fact, Gerald Knox had no intention whatever of taking Kildare's advice to leave matters as they were—far from it. And he had come along again, determined to try to worm the truth out of the juniors—or try to overhear something that would lead to his discovering the truth.

On reaching Study No. 10 and finding it empty, however, a sudden idea occurred to the prefect.

At any moment now Tom Merry and his chums would be returning to their study for their books before entering classes, and it would be a splendid chance to discover something. It was next to a certainty that they would be discussing what had happened so recently. Knox gritted his teeth indeed, as he guessed something of how they would be grinning and chortling over his recent discomfiture at Mr. Lathom's hands.

"I'll bowl the little villains out somehow," breathed the prefect, his eyes glittering with rage. "I'll find out somehow, and when I do, I'll make them wish they hadn't been born."

For a moment the unscrupulous prefect looked hastily about the room, and then, with sudden decision, he stooped and wormed his way under the couch, having already closed the door behind him.

It was a bit of a scrape to get under, but he was under at last safely enough—little dreaming that scarcely sixty seconds before an effigy of himself had been hidden in that very spot.

That it was a very astounding proceeding for a prefect in his position to do was clear enough to Knox, and he shuddered at the thought of discovery. If the juniors found him there—obviously for the purpose of eavesdropping—they would spread the story far and wide and make him more than an object of scorn.

But though he realised that fact, Knox was not in the mood to care much. He was fuming with bitter rage, and he was determined to discover who had flung that cracker, and who had "cheeked" him so barefacedly, at all costs. And especially was he keen to discover what Glyn & Co's game was. That it was something "up against" him, he was quite certain. He also knew quite well that the juniors had fooled him somehow over the Mr. Lathom affair, and he was resolved to find that out also.

So he hid and waited. The juniors would be bound to come in soon, and a word let drop would perhaps be enough for him.

He had to wait a very short time.

Scarcely had he taken up his uncomfortable position when footsteps sounded outside and the door flew open. From his hiding-place Knox grinned to himself as he saw the Terrible Three, followed by Glyn, Blake, Herries, and Digby, file into the room hurriedly. Digby came last and he closed and locked the door—a fact that made Knox's eyes gleam.

Now he would learn something!

But the next moment Knox got the shock of his life!

CHAPTER 6.

Surprising!

"NOW, you fellows, buck up!" said Bernard Glyn, the moment they were inside. "Let's get the blessed thing out. Did you say he was under the couch, Lowther?"

"Yes," chuckled Lowther. "He's there all serene! Yank him out and we'll soon deal with him! Keep cave at the door, Dig."

"Yes, rather!"

The hapless Knox fairly shook with fear.

He was beginning to realise now what discovery meant for him. To be found in such a humiliating, dishonourable position made him bite his lips in sheer, hopeless dismay. It would get all over the school that he had intended to eaves-

drop upon a few inky "fags," and the thought made him almost faint. How he wished now from the bottom of his heart that he had not been so utterly idiotic as to risk it.

He supposed, naturally enough, that he had been seen to enter the room by Lowther, and that they intended to yank him out in order to expose him. Naturally, in such circumstances, they would not fear handling a prefect.

Knox, almost stifled under the couch, fairly trembled with rage. And then a hand—Glyn's hand—closed on his arm. At the same moment another hand closed on his hair.

"Take care!" howled Glyn. "You silly ass, Lowther! Don't pull his blessed hair off, you idiot! Carefully!"

"Sorry!" murmured Lowther. "I didn't know— Oh, my hat!"

Lowther ended in a yell—a yell of fright!

It was echoed by yells from his companions.

For as their hands closed on the "guy," the guy moved, and a growl came from it—a growl truly ferocious.

Knox, being a prefect whose person was sacred, did not like several fags grabbing hold of him unceremoniously.

Naturally he resented such a sacrilege—especially in the mood he was in.

But Tom Merry & Co. had not expected resentment from a waxwork guy—even a lifelike guy made by the inventive genius of the Shell!

They stared with amazement as the guy moved and spoke.

"You little sweeps!" it growled savagely.

The next moment the couch heaved as the "guy" scrambled from under it, his face black with rage.

Tom Merry & Co. and Glyn & Co. yelled, and jumped

for the door—they could not help it!

It was very terrifying indeed to find an apparently inanimate object come to sudden life like this. Even stalwart heroes like Tom Merry & Co. were horrified for the moment.

But they were a trifle too late in jumping for the door—Knox saw that. As they staggered back before attempting the strategic retreat, Knox leaped for the door and cut off any possibility of their doing so. Then, suddenly sighting a walking cane of Tom Merry's in the corner, he made another leap for it. Then he went for the horrified juniors.

Lash, lash, lash, lash!

"Yarroooooogh!"

"Oh, great Scott! Yooooooop!"

"Oh, help! What the— Xowooooop!"

Lash, lash, lash!

In a yelling swarm the juniors stampeded round the study table, dodging desperately as Knox swiped at them viciously with the cane. They scarcely knew whether they were on their heads or their heels, but they did know that the cane hurt. And they scrambled desperately, frantically to get away from it.

Amidst yells and howls they stumbled round the table three or four times, and then Tom Merry made a mad leap for the door and tore it open. Followed by his yelling chums, who were followed in turn by the lashing cane, the hapless guy-makers stampeded out and flew for their lives.

Never in their lives had they had such a shock.

In the study doorway Knox paused, breathing hard. Then he flung the cane savagely back into the room and tramped away to his study. Whether the juniors exposed him or not, he felt that he had, at all events, paid back some of what he owed them.

Not until they reached the Fourth Form passage did the hapless juniors stop running, and then they halted and eyed each other eloquently as they rubbed their smarting, aching shoulders.

They were utterly bewildered as well as hurt. They had very soon realised that somehow a mistake had been made. Even Glyn's genius could never bring such life into an inanimate figure. It had undoubtedly been Knox himself—Knox who had been hiding under the couch, obviously waiting for them.

He must have tumbled—must have discovered the guy, and had waited for them to fetch it.

The hapless juniors groaned in despair at the thought.

For what had just happened would by no means end the matter. Knox would undoubtedly take the guy to Mr. Raiton, and a fearful row would follow for a certainty. Making a guy of a prefect would be treated as an insult to authority—as a very grave breach of rules to be punished with severe disciplinary action. Possibly it would mean a flogging for all concerned—possibly the sack for Glyn.

"Oh, you—you ass, Lowther! You must have let the sweep see—"

"Go on, blame me!" groaned Lowther, rubbing his shoulder. "How could I help it? I hid the guy safely enough, and I'm certain that fearful ruffian didn't spot me."

"Oh, rats! He must have done!"

It was at that moment that Arthur Augustus emerged from Study No. 6, and he eyed the wriggling juniors at first in astonishment. Then he grinned.

"Hallo, heah you are, you fellows," he remarked cheerily. "Pway don't look so feahfully pipped! It is all wight! The mattah is not so sewious as you suppose."

Arthur Augustus imagined they had only just discovered that the guy was missing, though he was puzzled at the way they were taking the discovery.

"No need to wiggle about like that!" he went on chirpily. "You will be supwised to learn, deah boys—"

"Oh, dry up!" hissed Lowther. "If you grin at us like that, you tailor's dummy, I'll biff you on the boko."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"It's nothing to grin about, anyway!" snorted Tom Merry.

"Hold on!" said Blake. "Gussy can't know anything about it; fatheads! No good slanging him for—"

"Weally, Blake, I do know all about it, deah boy!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "You see, the guy isn't lost, as you suppose, so you need not look so feahfully cut up, deah boys! I was very disgusted at the slack way in which you hid it undah the couch, and so I wemoved it to a safah place. Ha, ha, ha!"

But Gussy's amazed chums did not join in Gussy's hilarity. They glared.

"You whatter?" gasped Glyn. "You—you took the dummy from underneath the couch in Tom Merry's study, Gussy, you idiot?"

"Yaas, deah boy! I thought I would teach you a lesson, Glyn," said Arthur Augustus severely. "It was vewy careless to leave it with a foot sticking out from undah the couch for ewerybody to see like that. So I wemoved it, and it is now safely locked up in the Shell box-woom, deah boys!"

"Well, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gussy. "I expect you fellows were wathah scared, what? It is wathah funnny, you know; I considah it extremely funnny, in fact. I—heah, what—bai Jove! Welease me, you wuff— Yoooop!"

Bump!

The astonished Arthur Augustus descended to the floor with a heavy bump. In their present dazed state the juniors did not quite grasp the real meaning of Gussy's action, and his laughter was the last straw for them. Somehow, they felt that he was responsible for those terrific lashes from Knox's cane.

They bumped the astonished Gussy soundly, and then they streamed away, leaving him grovelling on the floor in great wrath and pain and astonishment. And it was not until later, when they had time to think it over, that they realised that not only had Gussy saved the guy, but he had also saved them from a nasty position, and possibly from a flogging in the bargain. While Glyn was overcome with relief as he realised the fact that his precious guy was safe after all, and all concerned felt great comfort at the thought also, realising that Knox would, for his own sake, never dare to make any further move in the matter—as regards reporting them, at all events. Which was a great comfort to all—if not to the unfortunate and ill-used Arthur Augustus.

CHAPTER 7.

Trimble Makes Hay!

"O H, good! Now's my chance!"

Baggy Trimble murmured the words with a soft chuckle as he blinked into Study No. 11 and saw that it was unoccupied. For the last few days—since Glyn had been at work on his guy, in fact—the schoolboy inventor had taken good care to lock his study door before leaving it.

The necessity for doing that was gone now, however—or Bernard Glyn evidently felt the necessity was gone! The guy was in a much safer place now. For one thing, there was no time before afternoon classes to move it, and for another Glyn and his fellow conspirators had deemed the cupboard in the box-room a safer place than any they could think of. Arthur Augustus had handed over the rusty key, and it now reposed in Glyn's own pocket. And as anyone rarely visited the box-room the juniors had agreed to leave the dummy there—for the present, at all events.

So Glyn & Co. had left their study unlocked—a fact that seemed to give great pleasure and satisfaction to Bagley Trimble, the fattest, laziest, and greediest member of the Fourth at St. Jim's.

Up to that afternoon, Baggy had taken very little interest

in Study No. 11. Fireworks did not interest him in the slightest, nor did guys, however cleverly made—though Baggy knew nothing of the guy, as it happened.

But since the rumpus in that study that afternoon, Baggy had been keenly interested in the study. Baggy had been one of the group round the doorway during the trouble between Mr. Lathom and Knox, and something had caught Trimble's eye which had interested him very much indeed.

It was the sight of the little pile of biscuit-tins and chocolate-boxes on the chair.

That they contained fireworks, Baggy did not dream for one moment. There was no earthly reason why Glyn should keep fireworks in biscuit-tins and chocolate-boxes—such a possibility did not even occur to the fat youth. He knew Glyn's people were wealthy, and that they often sent him "ripping" parcels of such dainties over from Glyn House, which was not far from the school.

And Trimble meant to sample the contents of some of those boxes.

To this end he had watched his chance, and having seen Glyn & Co. depart, he had peeped in cautiously to make sure it was unoccupied.

"Good!" he murmured again. "Glyn's a greedy beast—keeping all that lot for himself, I expect! He deserves to be taught a lesson. Such selfishness! Here goes!"

And Baggy slipped into the room and crossed to the chair. Grabbing one of the chocolate-boxes he crammed it beneath his podgy waistcoat; then he grabbed one of the small, flat biscuit-tins and shoved that beneath his jacket, and hastily left the study.

Unfortunately, he left a trifle too hastily, for he barged full into Gerald Knox, who happened to be passing just then.

Bump!

Trimble staggered backwards from the impact, as did Knox. But Knox recovered himself quickly, and he grabbed Trimble by the hair.

"You blundering young fool!" he snapped angrily. "Take that!"

And the prefect was just about to box Trimble's fat ear, when he sighted the biscuit-box just showing under the fat Fourth-Former's jacket.

"So that's the game!" he said. "Raiding again, you fat little thief!"

Knox wasn't a fellow to mince his words—or his actions, either. He snatched at the box and dragged it out.

"Oh, really, Knox! I say, gimme my biscuits back!" mumbled the fat junior, making a grasp at them.

"Not much!" said Knox, holding it away. "I've caught you in the act (this time); you fat little beast! Raiding Glyn's study cupboard, what?"

"Nunno! Nothing of the kind, Knox!" stammered Trimble. "I—I was taking them for—a present to Glyn, you know. But he's out, and so I was taking them away again. That's it! I say, you know, gimme them back!"

Knox grinned unpleasantly. He was well aware of Trimble's grub-raiding habits—in fact, he himself had suffered from them, for even prefects were not safe from Trimble's depredations when the fat youth was on the track of grub.

And, like Trimble, Knox hadn't the faintest suspicion that the tin contained anything else but biscuits. He hadn't even seen them while in the study, being much too excited and furious.

"Oh, no, you haven't raided 'em, of course!" grinned Knox. "Well, I shall confiscate these biscuits, Trimble. I don't approve of juniors gorging themselves on unwholesome food-stuff. Now clear, and be thankful I don't report you!"

With that the amiable prefect gave Trimble a hearty cuff and walked back to his study—with the tin under his arm.

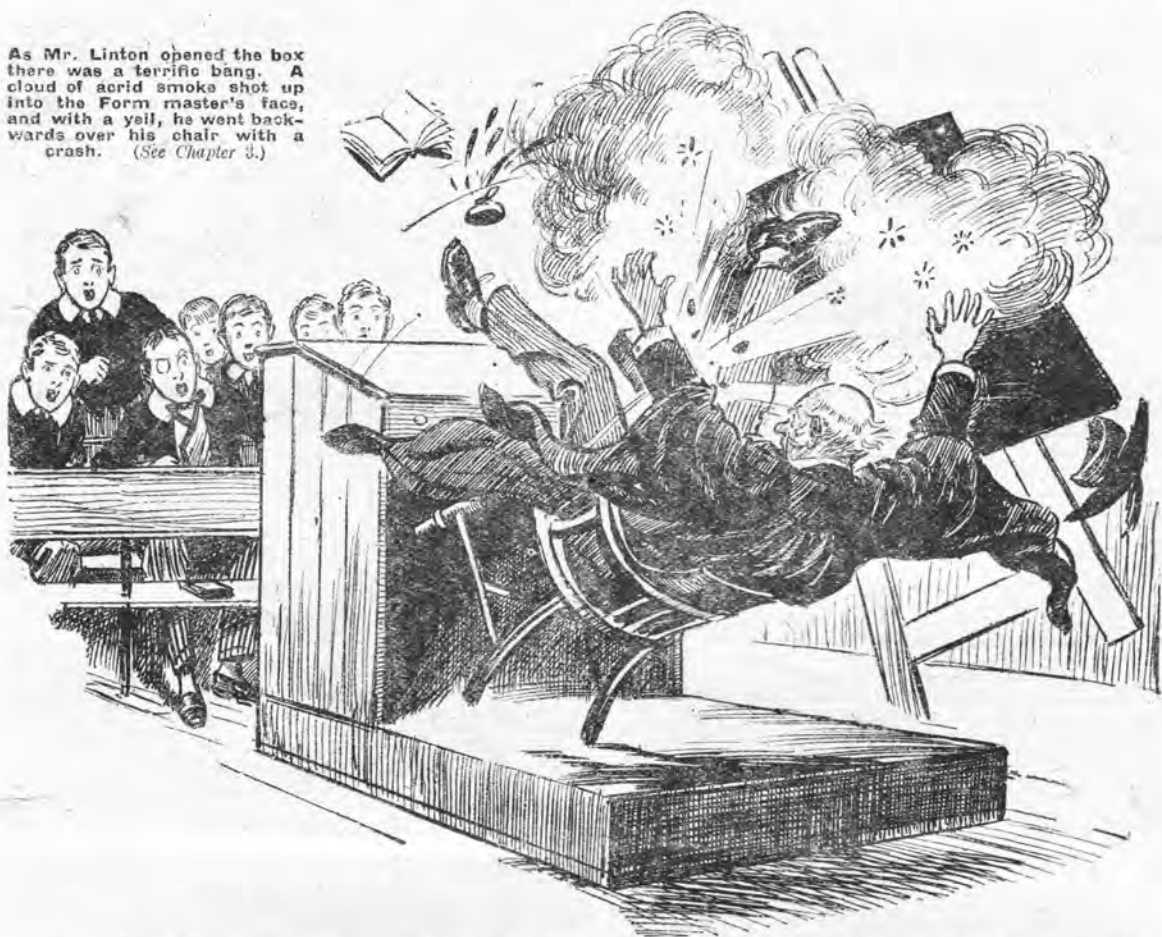
"Oh, the—the beast!" gasped Trimble, rubbing his singing head. "Oh, the awful beast! He's taken them to scoff them himself, the awful rotter! He knows I daren't say anything, the beast! Iced wafers, too! Oh, the dishonest beast!"

Trimble rolled away, quite shocked at Knox's unscrupulous action. Certainly, Knox's action was mean and questionable, to say the least of it. But it was just like Knox, and Trimble rolled on very wrathful and indignant, but thankful that Knox hadn't seen the chocolate-box.

But Trimble's thankfulness on that score was short-lived. As he rolled away, Trimble slipped the chocolate-box from under his waistcoat to take a gloating peep at it. He was anxious to learn whether the contents were cream, or plain, or nut—a very important question to Trimble. It would have been wiser had he left it until reaching the safety of his own study, for just as he drew out the box for a peep, Racke, Crooke, and Mellish came out of Study No. 7.

Racke sighted the box on the instant, and a curious look came into his eyes. He also had seen those boxes in Glyn's study, but, unlike Trimble and Knox, he knew perfectly well what they contained. As a matter of fact, Racke had hoped to get his hands on some of them for his own private

As Mr. Linton opened the box there was a terrific bang. A cloud of acrid smoke shot up into the Form master's face, and with a yell, he went backwards over his chair with a crash. (See Chapter 3.)



entertainment. He had seen Glyn and Noble filling one or two, and he knew exactly what was inside.

"Hallo!" he ejaculated, grabbing Trimble by the shoulder. "What the thump—"

"Leggo!" gasped Trimble, striving to cram the box back under his plump waistcoat. "It's mine, and— Here! Oh, you beast!"

For Racke had been quicker than Trimble, and had neatly snatched the box away.

"Yours is it?" grinned Racke.

"Yes, of course!" said Trimble indignantly. "Give it me back, you rotter! My aunt sent them by post this morning—she sends me some choes once a month, you know. Give it me, or I'll shout and fetch Railton here."

Racke chuckled and winked at his pals. He knew perfectly well that Trimble wouldn't dare to shout—far from it. He also knew perfectly well what had happened. Trimble had obviously raided the chocolate-box from Glyn's study, believing it contained chocolate.

"You fat thief!" said Racke, his lips curling in an unpleasant grin. "I think I'll take charge of this box, though, Baggy! You can tell Glyn I've got it. Mind you do!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Crooke and Mellish; they could see Baggy Trimble doing that.

"Look here—" roared Trimble.

"No time," said Racke coolly. "Time for classes, old chap. Good-bye! Better hurry."

"You—you awful beast!" gasped Trimble. The thought of losing the "chocolate," as well as the "biscuits," filled him with indignant wrath. "You rotten beast, Racke! Gimme my box back!"

"I'll give you my boot, instead!" said Racke. "Here it is! Now, you chaps, let's see who can get the most kicks in before reaching the Form-room!"

"Yarroooow!"

Trimble roared as Racke's boot clumped behind him. He did not wait for the other two to start—he flew!

"What a stroke of luck!" breathed Racke, looking at the box and then hiding it under his coat. "Just what I wanted to get hold of!"

"It's one of Glyn's gadgets, isn't it?" grinned Crooke.

"Yes; there's a giddy smoke-bomb inside—a combined cracker and smoke-bomb, in fact," chuckled Racke. "I believe they're stunners, according to Noble."

"But what d'you want it for now?" said Mellish. "Keep it for bonfire night, Racke?"

"Not much!" chuckled Racke. "It's just what I want to pay old Linton back for that licking he gave me this morning, the old cad! Come back in here."

And, with his eyes gleaming, Racke led his chums back into Study No. 7. Inside he hunted out a sheet of white paper and carefully wrapped up the box; then he wrote in block capitals the name of Mr. Linton on the outside.

"That'll do," he remarked with satisfaction. "No need for string. We've got to get this on Linton's desk without Linton or anyone knowing we put it there. See?"

"Phew! It's risky!" said Crooke, frowning.

"Not at all—if nobody sees us do it. Come on!"

With that Racke hid the parcel under his jacket and walked out to make his way to the Form-room, for the bell had just started to ring.

As he did so a small, weedy junior emerged from a study higher up. It was Skimpole, and Skimpole was evidently thinking out some scientific problem of great moment, for he walked with his eyes blinking through his spectacles at the passage linoleum, and his bulky brow wrinkled in deep thought.

He glanced up, as if seeing the trio ahead, and then ambled on with his head down again.

A sudden inspiration came to Racke and he acted in a flash.

Pushing his chums back into Study No. 7, he bent swiftly and laid the parcel on the passage floor. Then he slipped back into the study, closing the door almost shut.

Peeping through, he saw the scientific genius of the Shell amble up to the parcel and almost trip over it. But, after stumbling slightly, Skimmy stopped, blinked down at it, and then he picked it up.

He seemed to sight the name on the parcel at once, and, as Racke fully expected, Skimpole walked on carrying the parcel. Skimpole was a very kind-hearted and obliging fellow, and it was obvious that his intention was to hand the parcel to Mr. Linton.

"My hat!" chuckled Crooke. "I see the wheeze! Good for you, Racke!"

"I hope the silly fool doesn't take it to Linton's study,

though!" said Racke. "That would spoil all the fun. No; he's making for the Form-room. Good!"

Skimpole undoubtedly was. Racke & Co. followed the weedy Shell fellow, and Racke and Crooke followed him into the Shell Form-room, whilst Mellish went along to the Fourth, grinning.

Most of the fellows were already in their places, but Mr. Linton had not yet arrived. Skimpole marched to the master's desk and laid the parcel upon it. Then he went to his seat, still looking very occupied with his scientific thoughts.

Lowther, who sat next to Skimmy, eyed the parcel fixedly, and then he looked at Skimpole.

"What's the parcel, Skimmy?" he asked. "For old Linton?"

"Yes, my dear fellow," said Skimpole, coming suddenly out of his brown study. "It appears to be a small box wrapped in paper, which I found on the passage floor just outside Racke's study. As it was addressed to Mr. Linton I decided to bring it along and place it on his desk. I trust that I did right in doing so."

Lowther did also. Being a great practical joker himself, he very naturally became suddenly suspicious of that box—especially now he knew where it had been found. Moreover, the shape of the box was remarkably like the shape and size of the chocolate-boxes in Glyn's study.

"So you found it outside Racke's study, eh?" said Lowther.

"Yes, my dear Lowther. And now I come to recollect the incident," proceeded Skimpole, placing a bony finger reflectively against his bony forehead, "I believe Racke himself must have accidentally dropped it there, for I distinctly remember seeing him by his study door only a moment before. Dear me! So I did! It is very strange that he should not have seen the parcel, is it not, Lowther?"

"It jolly well is, Skimmy!" said Lowther, and he glanced behind him at Racke and Crooke on the back row.

His suspicions became almost a certainty as he noted that Racke and Crooke were grinning gleefully and expectantly. Racke met his eye and the grin suddenly faded.

"Phew!" murmured Lowther. "Oh, you ass, Skimmy! Can't you see it's a plant, you silly chump? Quick! Go and get that dashed parcel back! That cad Racke's up to some game with it, and has planted it on you!"

"Dear me! Really, my dear Lowther—"

"Glyn, you ass!" said Lowther, ignoring Skimmy and slipping from his seat across the gangway to Glyn, who sat opposite. "Are any of your giddy contraptions missing?"

"Eh? No, not that I know of," said the startled Glyn. "Why?"

"Look at that parcel on Linton's desk," said Lowther swiftly. "Skimmy says it's a box wrapped in paper. He found it on the floor in the Shell passage, and he thinks that cad Racke dropped it there. It's a plant, and I believe it's one of your giddy chocolate-boxes."

"M-mum-my hat!"

Glyn glared at the parcel on the desk, and his eyes fairly flashed with wrath and alarm. He jumped from his seat on the instant and made a rush for the desk, meaning to examine the parcel for himself.

But even as he did so Mr. Linton entered the room; and Glyn paused, hesitated, and then jumped back for his seat.

"Glyn," snapped Mr. Linton, "what are you doing out of your place? Resume your seat at once!"

He seated himself at his desk, and then his eyes fell upon the parcel, and he eyed it in some surprise.

Then he slowly removed the wrapping paper.

The Form watched him, some of them mildly interested in the parcel, Glyn and Lowther terrifically interested, while Racke and Crooke watched in gleeful expectation.

But Mr. Linton did not hurry. He noted that the box was a chocolate-box, and he stared at it in astonishment—until he also noted that it was not a new box, and that a strip of paper had been glued or pasted right round the broken edge of the box.

Then he remembered that Mr. Railton had promised him a new supply of chalks—though it struck him as strange that the Housemaster had sent them thus.

He started to tear off the paper round the edges.

As he lifted the box to do so Glyn sighted it clearly, recognised it at once, and jumped up from his seat.

But he was too late.

Mr. Linton opened the box! And then—

BANG!

It was a truly terrific bang.

And as it rang out a cloud of acrid smoke shot up into Mr. Linton's face, and, with a strangled yell, he went backwards over his chair with a crash, his chair coming up against the easel, which promptly collapsed, bringing down the blackboard with it, amid an appalling clatter and banging.

Crash, crash, crash!

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CHAPTER 8.

Justice Done!

"O H, m-mum-my hat!"

Bernard Glyn blinked aghast at the hapless master grovelling amidst the ruins of the black-board, easel, and chair, while dense masses of acrid, black smoke floated upwards.

The remarkable success of Glyn's little firework "gadget" brought him no delight, however. He stared, transfixed, at the master on the floor. The rest of the Form, startled out of their wits for the most part, were on their feet, likewise staring transfixed.

His smoke-bomb was undoubtedly an enormous success; but Glyn trembled as he thought of the trouble to come for someone.

Even Racke and Crooke had gone not a little white-faced; they had not expected Glyn's invention to create quite such a "stir" as this—far from it.

The Terrible Three were thunderstruck. It was Tom Merry who regained his wits first, however, and he hurried from his seat to the help of Mr. Linton.

The master's face was black and smudgy and he was trembling. Undoubtedly it had been a severe shock to him. He staggered, gasping and sneezing, as Tom, with the help of Talbot and Manners, helped him to his feet.

At that moment hurried footsteps sounded outside, and the door flew open to admit Mr. Railton. The Housemaster was looking very grim. He looked grimmer still when he saw Mr. Linton.

"Mr. Linton, what has happened? Who—who—"

The Housemaster sprang forward, and, grasping the chair, he righted it, and helped the Shell master into it. Mr. Linton sat down, gasping.

Mr. Railton's keen eyes swiftly noted the torn paper and blackened cardboard littered about, and the smell and smoke told him the rest.

His brow was thunderous.

"Mr. Linton, who—what young rascal has dared to play this trick upon you?" he said in a terrific voice. "Are you hurt?"

Mr. Linton shook his head, his handkerchief to his streaming eyes.

"I—I am not hurt, Mr. Railton," he gasped, sneezing violently. "I am suffering, however, from severe shock. Ah-ti-shoo! Ow! I—I scarcely know what has happened. There was a box on my desk—grooo!—addressed to me—atish-ooo!—and I opened it. It instantly exploded, sir! It is a trick—a dastardly trick, Mr. Railton!"

"Undoubtedly!" said Mr. Railton, glaring round at the Form. "You had better lie down in your room for a little while, Mr. Linton. This is an outrage—a dastardly outrage—and you may leave me to deal with it. Merry!"

"Sir."

"You will take charge of the Form while I help Mr. Linton to his room."

"Very well, sir."

"I—I think I can manage myself, Mr. Railton," gasped Mr. Linton. "Please do not bother. I think, however, that I will lie down as you suggest, sir. I—I have received a severe shock, as you can imagine."

The Housemaster nodded, and escorted the shaky Form master to the door. Just then Mr. Lathom came hurrying along from his Form-room, and Mr. Railton handed Mr. Linton over to him and returned to the Shell.

There was a steely look in the Housemaster's eyes that boded ill for the culprit. Racke, though he felt himself quite safe, could not help trembling a little.

"Now, boys," snapped Mr. Railton icily, "I will ask the boy or boys responsible for placing that—dangerous firework on Mr. Linton's desk to step forward. If he is wise he will do so without delay, as I am determined to discover the author of this disgraceful outrage."

Mr. Railton waited, his mouth set in a straight, hard line.

The hapless Skimpole, his knees knocking together with sheer fright, stood up very slowly, and moved out of his seat before the Form.

The Housemaster nearly fell down.

The harmless and genial genius of the School House was the very last fellow he would have suspected of such a crime.

"Bless my soul! Skimpole! Is it possible?" he gasped.

"Oh dear! Really, sir, I feel bound to admit that I was the person who placed that unfortunate parcel on Mr. Linton's desk," mumbled Skimpole, his voice trembling.

"You placed it there?" thundered Mr. Railton.

"Oh dear! Ye-es, sir. But I had not the faintest idea, believe me, sir," said Skimpole earnestly, "that it contained that terrible bomb. I found it lying on the passage floor, and as it was addressed to Mr. Linton, I brought it here and placed it on the desk."

"Oh!" said Mr. Railton. "I—I understand, Skimpole. You may return to your place, my boy."

The Housemaster knew Skimpole, and he was quite satisfied as to Skimpole's innocent role in the affair—indeed, it was quite impossible to suspect the guileless Skimmy of any sort of practical joking, much less such a daring "joke" as this.

Mr. Railton looked over the class. His glance settled upon Glyn.

"Glyn, stand out!" he snapped.

"Oh, ye-es, sir!"

"Mr. Linton informs me that you were out of your place and by his desk, when he entered the room, Glyn."

"Oh, ye-es, sir. But—"

"I gave you permission to manufacture a supply of fireworks, Glyn," snapped the Housemaster. "You gave me an undertaking that they would not be used for an unlawful purpose, and that they would not be let off inside the school."

"Yes, sir. But—"

"Was that smoke-bomb, or whatever it may have been, made by you, Glyn?"

"Yes, sir. But I swear I know nothing about how it came to be here, excepting what Skimpole has said, sir."

Mr. Railton turned to the Form.

"Stand up, any boy who knows anything of this matter," he ordered.

Nobody stood up. Lowther knew something—or believed he did—but he could scarcely sneak.

Mr. Railton was looking at Glyn again.

"I regret that, in the circumstances, I cannot accept your word, Glyn!" snapped the master. "You have admitted having made that infernal thing, and Mr. Linton states you were near his desk as he entered. I am also well aware of your reckless habit of playing dangerous practical jokes. Merry, kindly keep order until my return."

The Housemaster hurried out, apparently to get further information from Mr. Linton. There was a buzz as he departed.

"Glyn, you awful ass—"

"Glyn, you silly fool—"

A dozen voices called to Bernard Glyn. But Monty Lowther turned round and fixed a determined glare on the scared Aubrey Racke. He saw that Mr. Railton already believed Glyn guilty. His reputation for practical joking, his well-known recklessness, and the fact that he had manufactured the bomb, were obviously enough for Mr. Railton.

And Monty was quite certain Racke was guilty, and quite determined that Glyn should not suffer.

"It wasn't Glyn, you fellows!" snapped Monty. "It was that cad Racke—I'm certain of it!"

"You—yon rotten fibber!" panted Racke. "I know nothing about it, you cad!"

"Skimpole says he saw you a moment before on the very spot where he found the parcel."

There was a buzz at that. Racke went quite white as he felt the angry glances of the fellows fixed upon him. He bit his lip hard.

"It's a rotten lie!" he hissed. "I tell you I know nothing about it. Skimpole picked it up—"

"Really, Racke!" said Skimpole, quite shocked. "How can you be so untruthful. I saw you bending down outside your study door a moment before I picked up the parcel. I am afraid that you are prevaricating in an attempt to hide your guilt, Racke."

"Great pip! Of course he is," said Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming scornfully at Racke. "Linton licked him this morning, and this is his revenge. He's trying to shove the blame on poor old Skimmy or Glyn?"

"The rotter!"

There was a chorus, and Racke shivered.

"I—I tell you—" he was beginning, when Lowther cut him short.

"That's enough, Racke," he said. "No good arguing the point. We know you only too well. Anyway, I tell

you this: If you don't own up when Railton returns, I shall tell him myself. That's flat!"

"That's the ticket, Lowther!"

There was a murmur of approval, and Racke gritted his teeth. He had relied upon Lowther not daring to "sneak," but the approval of the rest told him they did not, in the circumstances, look upon such a course as sneaking. Racke was not popular in the Shell.

"You—you rotter, Lowther!" he hissed. "If—if—"

"I shall, I promise you," said Lowther scornfully. "Own up like a man, you cad! Anyway, if you refuse it will be the worse for you. Better for you to own up yourself than for Railton to bowl you out. You know jolly well Railton will soon get to the bottom of it."

Racke did. The rascal of the Shell knew full well that Mr. Railton would take Skimpole's word before his at any time. Racke's reputation was against him, as Glyn's was against him in quite another direction. And the master of the School House had a way of his own—an extremely efficient way—of worming the truth out of a suspect. Racke knew he could never hold out against a searching cross-examination.

He was about to stammer another denial, however, when Mr. Railton returned to the Form-room.

"Mr. Linton shares in my belief that you are the culprit, Glyn," he said sternly. "Which is not surprising, in view of your reputation for reckless joking."

"I didn't do it, sir," said Glyn warmly. "It was a rotten trick, and I had no hand in it, excepting the making of the bomb."

"I regret that I cannot accept your word, Glyn," was the tart answer. "You still persist in denying it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. I have no other course than to take you before the headmaster, who will deal with the matter. Come!"

There was a murmur from some of the fellows near Racke.

"Now, Racke, you cad!"

"Own up, you sweep!"

Racke shivered as glances were turned on him from all parts of the room.

Lowther moved in his seat to rise, his eyes fixed threateningly on Racke.

It was now or never!

Racke staggered to his feet, and with a savage glare at Lowther he stepped out from his place.

"Stop, sir!" he gasped.

It was scarcely above a whisper, but Mr. Railton heard, and paused on his way to the door.

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"Well, Racke? If you know anything of this matter—"
 "I—I did it, sir!" gulped Racke.
 "You did it?" ejaculated the Housemaster. "You mean that you played this trick upon your Form master, Racke?"
 "Y—yes, sir! It—it was only a joke, sir. I—I didn't dream it would do what it did!" panted Racke.

The Housemaster's face changed.
 "Then—then Glyn is not the culprit?"

"No, sir!" articulated Racke. "I—I did it! It was only a j—joke, sir!"

"Go to your place, Glyn," said Mr. Railton quietly. "I am sorry that you should have been unjustly charged with the offence, and that I found myself unable to accept your word."

"Thank you, sir!" said Glyn.

He walked to his place, and Mr. Railton fixed his stern glance on the shaking Racke.

"I am very glad indeed that you have confessed in time, Racke," said Mr. Railton quietly. "Had you not done so a grave injustice might have taken place. You placed that box on the passage floor expecting that it would be taken to Mr. Linton?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Where did you obtain it?"

"I got it from Trimble of the Fourth," said Racke promptly enough.

"Trimble?" exclaimed the Housemaster in astonishment.

"Yes, sir. He had taken it from Glyn's study, believing it held chocolates," stammered Racke. "I—I took it from him and did that with it just for a joke. I didn't dream it would act as it did, sir."

Mr. Railton was grim, but the Form could not help grinning when they heard that Trimble had taken it. But the Housemaster knew Trimble's little failings well enough, and he did not doubt Racke's explanation—for once.

"Very well," said Mr. Railton, after a pause.

"It was an exceedingly wicked and dangerous trick to play, Racke. But you have owned up to the truth in time, and I shall not take you before Dr. Holmes, but will deal with you myself. Take up your position across that desk!"

"Oh!"

Racke groaned, his knees knocking together. But there was no help for it. He took up his position across the desk.

It was a record thrashing, and Mr. Railton was breathing hard when he flung the cane down at last. Aubrey Racke was almost weeping with pain and humiliation. He fairly dropped from the desk and tottered to his place.

"Let that be a lasting lesson to you, Racke!" snapped Mr. Railton. "Merry, I will leave you in charge again until Kildare comes to take the Form in Mr. Linton's absence."

With that the Housemaster left the room. And a couple of minutes later Kildare came to take charge. Lessons went on without further incident. Mr. Linton, still looking rather pale and shaky, coming to resume his duties after afternoon break.

Aubrey Racke found it very difficult to sit down for the rest of the afternoon. He had had his little joke and he was still paying for it; but, from the glances of bitter hatred he shot at Lowther every now and again, it was clear to anyone who knew him that Racke intended to make Lowther pay also—if he could!

CHAPTER 9.

Knox's Tea-Party!

"OH, here you are, you fat rotter!"
 "Yow! Oh, really, Glyn! I say, keep him off, you fellows! Yoooooop!"
 Trimble howled as Glyn's hand closed on his collar.

It was very clear that Trimble had a guilty conscience, and there was a laugh as he squirmed in Glyn's grasp.

Glyn was looking exceedingly wrathful. Trimble had raided his study, had purloined his precious gadgets, and had very nearly got him into very serious trouble.

It was not surprising that Glyn was waiting outside the Fourth Form-room for Trimble when classes ended. And it was scarcely surprising that Trimble was alarmed to find him waiting—especially as the affair in the Shell Form-room had reached the ears of the Fourth, including Baggy Trimble.

Baggy, on hearing what the chocolate-box had contained, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,029.

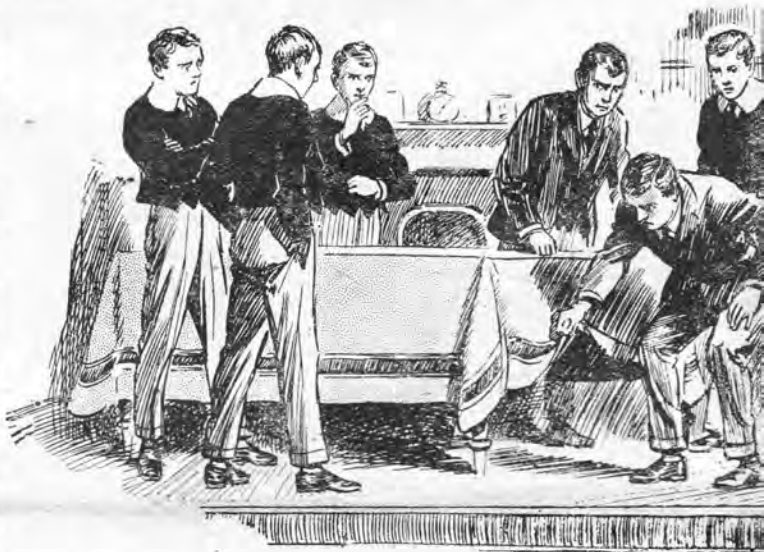
felt very thankful now that Racke had saved him from opening it and getting the fright of his life. But he did not feel quite so thankful now as he looked at Glyn's wrathful face.

"I—I say, it wasn't me, Glyn!" he squeaked. "If that beast Racke told you he got that box from me he's telling whoppers! You know what a fibber he is!"

"I know what a fibber you are, Baggy!" said Glyn grimly. "You cheeky rotter!"

"Not at all! It's a mistake!" gasped Baggy. "Racke is trying to shove the blame on me, you know! Besides, I knew all along that they weren't chocolates. As for the tin of biscuits, I know they can't be biscuits, and I—"

"There's a tin of stuff missing, too!" said Glyn wrathfully. "I knew you must have taken that as well. Where is it, you fat idiot?"



"One of you chaps with a mask over his face threw a cracker at me," said Knox. "And I'm going to find that mask!" The prefect began his search of the study, and the juniors watched him with smiles on their faces. They knew he would not find the mask, or the guy they had hung from a rope outside the window—

"Yow! Stop shaking me, you beast! How do I know? Besides, it'll serve that beast Knox right if he gets blown up or something!"

"What?"

The juniors stared at Baggy.

"Knox!" stuttered Glyn. "You mean to say Knox has that missing biscuit tin?"

"Ow! Oh dear! No—I mean, yes! He must have taken it, you know! I say, don't tell him I told you," added Trimble in sudden alarm, "or he'll nearly kill me!"

"So Knox has got it!" gasped Glyn in amazement.

"Ow! Yes. The beast took it from me—that is, I mean he didn't take it from me! I know nothing about it, of course! It's all a mistake!"

"You footling ass!" roared out Glyn. "Out with it! Tell me the truth or I'll smash you!"

"Oh dear!" Trimble groaned. "It—it's all right, Glyn. I'll tell you! Knox took it from me. I just happened to be examining the box, wondering what was inside, when Knox came along. He confiscated it, the mean beast!"

"Oh!"

"It's a fact," said Trimble. "Knox is giving a tea-party in his study this afternoon—he's invited Cutts and St. Leger and Gilmore of the Fifth, you know. I say, you fellows go and raid the rotter and get it back. The beast cuffed me, you know!"

"Oh crumbs!" gurgled Lowther. "What a scream! Old Knox must have thought they were biscuits—just as this fat ass did!"

"Oh, really, Lowther—"

"Phew!" breathed Glyn, his eyes gleaming. "That's it, of course! The cad's pinched the tin for his tea-party. If—"

"I say, Glyn, old fellow— Yoooooop!"

Trimble howled and flew, as Glyn planted a heavy shoe behind him. Glyn allowed him to go—he had little interest in Trimble now. The news that Knox had actually collared

one of his mystery boxes was very cheering to the Shell joker—just as it was to Tom Merry & Co.

"Just what we wanted!" breathed Glyn. "I intended to send a tin to Knox on Bonfire Night. But he's saved me the trouble."

"Supposing he hears about what happened to Linton, though?" said Lowther, his face falling.

"It isn't likely," said Tom Merry reflectively. "If he's giving a party he's bound to cut away to his study as soon as he gets out of his Form-room. Kildare knows about it, of course, but he isn't likely to gas about it to Knox. They're scarcely on speaking terms, for one thing."

"That's so. Good!"

"I think we'll trot along to Knox's study and see what happens," said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "It will be

ba fagging for Knox that afternoon. He stared at the crowd, closing the door as he did so.

"Just a sec, Jameson!" said Tom Merry eagerly. "Is Knox having his tea?"

"Yes."

"Has he got a box of biscuits, kid?"

"Yes. Giddy iced wafers," grinned Jameson. "I'm hoping to sample a few if he leaves any. The beggar's such a mean beast, and he doesn't give a poor starving fag much chance, though. I say, what's the giddy game?" he added, looking curiously at the little crowd of juniors.

"You'll hear in a minute, I fancy!" grinned Glyn. "Going back in there, kid?"

Jameson nodded.

"Just going to borrow some butter from Darrell," he said. "You silly owls had better clear. Knox's in a rotten bait this afternoon, I can tell you!"

"Good! Leave the door slightly open when you go back, there's a good kid!"

"Not so much of the kid!" snorted Jameson.

"What's the game, anyway?"

"Cut off for the butter!" hissed Tom Merry.

"You'll see in a jiffy, Jameson."

"Oh, all right!"

Jameson grinned, and cut off to Darrell's study. He knew that some jape was afoot against the hated Knox, and he saw no reason why he should spoil it. He was back again in a couple of minutes with a chunk of butter on a plate, and he winked at the juniors as he re-entered Knox's study, leaving the door slightly open as he did so.

The juniors could hear Knox speaking now.

"Yes," he was saying savagely. "I'm going to make those little fiends sit up before I've finished with them! They did me this afternoon, and I'm certain they've got something up against me!"

"Perhaps going to make a guy of you for to-morrow night!" grinned Cutts cheerfully. "Bonfire Night to-morrow, remember!"

"Hang Bonfire Night!" snarled Knox. "I'll watch they don't come any tricks with me, anyway! If I could find out who chucked that cracker this afternoon, though, I'd give him the hiding of his life!"

"Well, I'd help you there, old chap!" said Cutts. "It gave me a dashed shock, too! I say, what about that tin of biscuits, old chap? Iced wafers—eh? Good!"

"Get them from the tuckshop?" asked St. Leger carelessly. "The giddy tin looks an old one, anyway."

"Oh, yes?" said Knox coolly. "I must speak to Mrs. Taggles about sending me along old stock. Still, they may be fresh enough."

The juniors heard the tin lifted from the table. They held their breaths and looked at each other.

Then they heard the sound of paper tearing—obviously Knox tearing the strip from round the tin.

There followed a moment's silence, and then—
Bang!

It was a terrific explosion.

But that wasn't all. The tin was much bigger than the chocolate-box, and Glyn had managed to get quite a number of his specialities into it. The bang was followed, first by a combined yell of alarm from the feasters, and then by falling chairs and crashing crockery. Then came another bang, and a whole series of alarming cracks and explosions. Bang! Crack! Fizz! Splutter, splutter! Bang!

Tom Merry stepped forward and shoved the door wide.

The room was almost full of smoke—choking, acrid smoke from Glyn's special smoke-bomb, and over the table and over the carpet jumping-crackers were dancing and banging, while rip-raps were leaping about and spurring fire amid a mass of spark-riven smoke.

"Oh, my hat!" gurgled Glyn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors out in the passage exploded into a roar.

From other studies seniors came running, and a swarm of juniors were soon congregated round the door, roaring with laughter.

Kildare, his face grim, pushed his way through the crowd.

At last the final squib fizzed out, and Knox, his face red with fury and amazement, jumped to the window and opened it wide—Cutts and Leger and Gilmore still stamping on the sparks.



—But someone else had seen the guy! That was Mr. Lathom. He saw the dummy figure hanging from the rope, and jumped in amazement. For the face that looked down on him was the face of Gerald Knox! "Good Heavens!" gasped the Form master. (See Chapter 4.)

a thousand pities if Knox does hear about that. Still, we must hope for the best."

"One thing about it," said Blake gleefully, "the mean cad won't dare to split, or say anything about it. He knows what the beaks would say if they knew he's confiscated the box for his own giddy use."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway let us wush along and see, deah boys!"

The "deah boys" lost no time in doing so. The thought of what was likely to happen when Knox opened that box of "biscuits" filled them with cheery anticipations. In a crowd they hurried along to Knox's study, advancing more cautiously as they neared the door.

It was closed, and from behind it came a cheery rattle of cups and saucers and a hum of conversation. As Tom Merry crept nearer the door opened suddenly.

But it was only Jameson of the Third, who happened to

The smoke cleared at last, and Knox glared ferociously at the laughing crowd in the doorway.

"What the dickens does this mean, Knox?" demanded Kildare. "Dash it all, what's this kids' game? You know it's against rules to let fireworks off indoors! Are you potty?"

Knox glowered at him. To be charged with breaking rules by Kildare was the last straw.

"You confounded idiot!" he roared, glaring at the captain of the school. "D'you think I'm the fellow to let dashed fireworks off in my study? Can't you see it's a trick?"

"Oh!" said Kildare, with a faint smile. "How did it happen, then?"

Knox was about to explain furiously, when he pulled himself up sharply.

How could he explain the matter? He had deliberately "robbed" a scrubby fag of the box, pretending he was "confiscating" it, for his own personal use.

Knox shuddered at the possibility of the truth coming to light. Even Cutts & Co., though they obviously suspected something now, would have been aghast to know he had played such a shabby, paltry trick.

He could not explain!

He stammered and stuttered and stopped, Kildare eyeing him curiously. From the doorway came another howl of laughter. The juniors had "tumbled," if nobody else had.

"Well, what the thump is the matter, Knox?" said Kildare impatiently. "How did it happen?"

"Find out!"

"What?" gasped Kildare.

"Mind your own dashed business!" shouted Knox, in a rage. "And get out of my study, Kildare! I'm a prefect, and can attend to my own affairs without your interference!"

"Oh!" Kildare was quite taken aback. But he nodded grimly. "Oh, all right! I'll leave you to investigate it, then," he said, curbing his temper.

Kildare marched out of the study, the laughing crowd making way for him. He ignored them and strode away. Knox glared after him and then at the juniors.

"Clear out!" he roared furiously. "You hear me?"

"How did it happen, Knox?" asked Monty Lowther sweetly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—your little sweeps!" shouted Knox.

He made a rush for his ashplant, grabbed it, and dashed at the crowd in the doorway.

"Look out!"

"Yaas, watah! Wun, deah boys—wun like anythin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Roaring with laughter, the swarm of hilarious juniors scattered as Knox rushed out, his ashplant raised aloft. They scattered in all directions. In a couple of seconds the passage outside Knox's study door was deserted, save for several curious seniors, who stared at Knox in amazement. But the prefect ignored them, and slouched back into his study.

"What the merry dickens does this mean, Knox?" demanded Cutts, rubbing his blackened face. "Where the thump did you get that box—off that little fiend Glyn?"

"Find out!" hooted Knox.

"Eh? Oh, all right!" grinned Cutts, glancing at the table which was a sight, covered as it was with smashed crockery, burnt paper and powder. "I think I'll go and try to find out now, old chap. It looks as if the giddy tea-party's off, doesn't it? And, if you don't mind my mentioning it, Knox, you're not as polite to your giddy guests as you might be."

"Rather not!" agreed Gilmore, with a chuckle.

Cutts walked out, and Gilmore and St. Leger followed him.

They saw that an enjoyable tea was out of the question now, and they did not wish to be asked to help Knox to clear the mess away.

They left Knox fairly raging. And what the Sixth-Former said to himself in the privacy of his study after that would have very soon brought about his dismissal as a prefect could the ears of anyone in authority have heard it.

CHAPTER 10.

Desperate Measures!

BONFIRE NIGHT at last!

The great night had arrived. In the old quadrangle at St. Jim's the November mist was thick, and lights twinkled in the windows through the falling dusk. In the School House all was feverish excitement as the juniors and fags made final preparations for the great celebration.

Fireworks were being sorted out in the studies, and there

was a great demand for matches and suchlike, while Mother Taggles' stock of Guy Fawkes masks was long since gone.

All was bustle and excitement in the School House. In Glyn's study, especially, Tom Merry & Co. and Glyn himself and his chums were very busy indeed arranging various "gadgets," and getting the fireworks packed up to carry down to the footer field, where the bonfire was all ready for Taggles to set alight at the appointed time.

The guy was quite finished now, and Glyn had selected the fireworks that were to compose the infernal machine which went into Knox the Second's chest, and it was safe in the cupboard in the box-room, waiting to be fetched in time for the procession. Glyn had taken great care in packing the arrangement into the guy's "chest," and had fixed up his "electrically-timed detonator" inside and fastened the door under the coat and waistcoat of the effigy.

Over in the New House there was plenty of excitement and activity also, but also not a little gloom. Figgins & Co. had done their best to see that things were lively that evening. They had a fair supply of fireworks to begin with, and they had made a guy that was alleged to resemble Mr. Ratcliff.

They had also hollowed out logs of wood and placed crackers inside them, and placed the logs in Mr. Ratcliff's coal-scuttle, being determined that the Housemaster should

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also have fireworks that evening. They had thoughtfully taken Mr. Ratcliff's candle from his candlestick in his bedroom, and had substituted an imitation in the form of a jumping cracker, hoping devoutly that Mr. Ratcliff would not notice the difference until he had lit it.

But Figgins & Co. were not satisfied.

The fact was that they were very jealous and envious of the School House fellows. They knew that Glyn had made some wonderful fireworks, and they also knew that he had made a wonderful guy.

They had not yet found out, however, whom the guy represented, and they still nourished the suspicion that it represented one of them. Figgins, indeed, had a rooted conviction that it was an effigy of himself—quite an erroneous impression, of course.

Still, he entertained it, and it made him very uneasy indeed.

"It's no good, you fellows!" he said, looking out of the window of their study in the New House. "We're going to be given the kybosh this time, you men!"

"I don't see it!" growled Kerr. "Blow the School House! We'll have some fun, anyway!"

"But it won't do," said Figgins, shaking his head. "Even if their guy isn't an effigy of one of us, it'll be a score over us! Look at ours! It's no better than the fags' guy of old Selby!"

"Can't be helped!"

"It can!" snapped Figgins. "I tell you we've got to do something, you fellows! And there's time even yet! What about having another try to find out where those School House worms keep their guy? I vote we try to capture it,

anyway, when the procession does start! We'll jolly soon know the truth now!"

"Well, we might!" assented Kerr, wrinkling his brows. "But—"

Kerr broke off as a sudden series of terrific bangs floated over from the School House across the quadrangle. Figgins looked out of the open window and grinned.

"What is it, Figgy?" gasped Fatty Wynn, joining him there.

Figgins chuckled, and pointed across to a lighted window in the School House. A window had just been flung violently upwards, and a head and shoulders popped out with a volume of smoke curling out above the dusky quad.

"Only Selby!" said Figgins, with a smile. "That's Selby's room, and I expect those fags have been chucking crackers down his chimney! Good luck to 'em!"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

Figgins leaned on his elbows, staring out into the quad. He was gloomy again now. All the fireworks were ready, and the New House juniors were idle now until the time came round to begin the celebrations. The window opposite had closed again now. Then Figgins became aware that three juniors were walking underneath his window.

He looked down, wondering who they could be. He gave a start as he recognised Racke, Crooke, and Mellish.

"Hallo!" he murmured. "What's this game?"

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It looked rather suspicious, for Racke & Co. had halted right beneath Figgins' window.

Their voices floated up to the three New House fellows.

"It's a silly game altogether!" Racke was saying loudly. "Fancy fellows like Glyn and his pals making a guy like a lot of silly fags! Rot, I call it!"

"Still, it's a jolly clever guy!" answered Crooke. "I've seen it!"

"So've I," said Racke. "I watched Glyn messing with it only a few minutes ago. They keep it in the box-room cupboard—the one at the end of our landing, you know. Silly place to keep it, I think!"

"Those New House chaps might easily get wind of where it's kept," agreed Crooke. "If they knew, they'd be after it like a shot."

"And they'd easily get it, too," said Racke. "All the fellows are busy in the studies, and Glyn and Tom Merry and his pals are busy packing fireworks in their study. A pocket-knife would easily slip the lock on the cupboard door. I really think Glyn's an ass to keep it there!"

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors below went on talking, but Figgins had heard enough. Figgins was no fool, and he knew perfectly well that the little discussion below was entirely for he and his chums' benefit. He knew that Racke & Co. were in disgrace, and that they were very much up against Tom Merry & Co.

"Oh, the treacherous rotters!" breathed Figgy. "They meant us to hear all this, you chaps! Playing traitors to their own House! Well, we'll accept the information. All's fair in love and war, ain't it? But we'll teach those cads below a lesson; they need one badly!"

With that Figgins hurried from the room. He was only absent ten seconds, and when he returned he was staggering under the weight of two fire-buckets, filled to the brim with water.

He rested one on the carpet, lifted the other on the sill, and glanced down.

Racke & Co. were just about to move on.

Figgins hesitated no longer.

Swoooooosh!

"Yarrooooooogh!"

Splash!

Quick as lightning Figgy dropped the empty bucket and lifted the second one.

Swoooooooooosh!

This time a series of howls came from below, and, looking out, the gleeful trio of New House juniors sighted Racke, Crooke, and Mellish dancing about like dervishes.

"Have some more?" asked Figgins, calling down cheerily. "Get some more, Fatty! They need a good washing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The New House juniors roared with laughter as Racke & Co., drenched to the skin, took to their heels.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kerr. "Good for you, Figgy! They deserved it, and more!"

"Yes, rather!" laughed Fatty Wynn, eyeing Figgy admiringly. "But—but, I say, Figgy, do you really mean you're going to do something now?"

"I should jolly well think so!" said Figgins. "We're too desperate to afford to lose a chance like this! I'm pretty certain what Racke said was quite true. The spiteful little toad wants us to do down Tom Merry's lot, of course. We'll find their guy in the cupboard, I fancy. I know the cupboard well enough, and we'll easily get it open. We'll take a rope and drop it down into the quad. Then we'll slip down the rope ourselves!"

"Phew! Good wheeze!"

"Come on! Let's go and get Redfern and his men on the job! This is going to be the score of the term, chaps!"

And the gleeful New House trio hastily left the room to make arrangements for the proposed raid with Redfern & Co.

CHAPTER 11.

Bewildering!

"HANG the cads!"

Thus Aubrey Racke of the Shell, and his chums, Crooke and Mellish, echoed his sentiment heartily.

They were drenched through and shivering. That sudden deluge of water from above had been icy cold, and it had given them a shock in more ways than one. They were in a towering rage as they wended their dismal way indoors.

"Hang the beastly cads!" hissed Racke through chattering teeth. "But we'll have our own back out of Figgins, too, my lads, for this. Come on, and let's get changed quick. I mean to be in time for Figgins and his rotten pals when they do come raiding!"

"You—you think they'll come, after doing this?" snarled Crooke.

"Of course they will," said Racke scornfully. "Because they did that to us doesn't mean the cads won't swallow what we told them and act on it. They jolly well will. They're fairly aching to get hold of that guy, I tell you. Come on!"

Crooke and Mellish followed quickly enough. They changed swiftly, and then in Study No. 7 Racke told them his idea.

"I'm going to make sure they turn up," he snapped. "and then I'm going to drop a hint to Knox. I shall tell him there's something on in the box-room at the end of this passage, and I fancy that will cook Figgins' goose, as well as Glyn's lot. See the idea?"

"Phew! Yes, rather! Knox will rush to the box-room and catch them with the guy."

"Just that," said Racke, his eyes gleaming. "They'll have to pass this door to get to the box-room, and then I'm off to see Knox."

And Racke took up his position at the door, having opened it slightly to enable him to see into the passage without being seen himself.

He had not to wait long. It had taken the black sheep of the Shell some minutes to change, and Figgins & Co. had lost little time. Scarcely had Racke been watching many minutes when he heard a scuffle of feet in the passage. Several fellows had passed the door before, but Racke knew that his watch was ended now.

The next moment six juniors came darting past Study No. 7, and Racke chuckled softly as he recognised Figgins & Co. of the New House.

He peeped out into the passage after them, and grinned as he saw them vanish into the alcove where the box-room was situated at the far end of the passage where it turned on to the Fourth passage.

The next moment Racke was scudding hard for Knox's room. A word dropped to Knox was enough. The rascally prefect would not give him away afterwards. Racke knew that well enough, being one of Knox's toadies.

And meanwhile Figgins & Co. were safe enough in the box-room. It had been a decidedly risky run from the lower box-room, up the stairs and along the passages, but the cheery New House jokers were used to taking risks. And now the cupboard containing the mystery guy was before them.

"Here we are," breathed Figgy. "Too risky to light the gas, chaps." He struck a match as he spoke, and then he chuckled as he held the light to the cupboard door. "Oh, good! The blessed key is in the lock!"

It was. Whether by accident or design, Glyn had carelessly left the key in the lock.

"Save us breaking open the giddy door," said Figgins. "We'll soon have that opened."

The next moment the rusty key clicked and the door opened. It revealed a bulging form wrapped in a sheet as in a shroud. It was undoubtedly the guy.

"Out with it!" whispered Figgins breathlessly. "No time to squint at it now. Here, leave it to me!"

The match went out, but a little light came through from the passage outside, and grabbing the bulky object, Figgins slung it over his shoulder, surprised at the lightness of it. Then he started for the door, and as he did so Redfern gave a warning hiss.

"Cave! Oh, my hat! It's Knox!"

"And he looks like coming here, too!" groaned Fatty Wynn. "Oh, what rotten luck!"

"All serene!" breathed Figgins. "Get behind the door, and if he comes in go for him. Then shove him in the cupboard. Those giddy chaps will get a surprise when they come for the guy. Hallo, he is coming here! Look out!"

Knox was undoubtedly making for the box-room. He turned into the alcove, and after hesitating a brief instant outside the door, as if listening, he marched in, striking a match as he did so.

But he never reached the gas-bracket, if that was his objective. For even as he entered the room the five juniors were upon him, and he went down with a muffled gasp and a thud.

Beyond that he gave no sound—the desperate New House juniors saw to that. He rolled on the floor, struggling desperately and savagely, but five juniors were a little too much for one senior.

Before he knew what was happening to him Knox found himself firmly held and rushed to the cupboard. Without a word being spoken he was rushed inside like a sack of coke and the door was slammed upon him!

Click!

The key turned in the lock almost before the scared and dazed senior was aware that he was inside.

"Now come on!" breathed Figgins, taking a cautious peep out. "All clear, I think. Jingo, we're for it now, if we're copped!"

There was no doubt about that. The New House juniors had no right in the School House, not even on Bonfire Night. And now—

Figgins & Co. were determined not to be "copped."

They dashed out and sped softly along the passage which, luckily, was deserted at the moment, making scarcely a sound in their rubber-soled shoes.

But their luck did not last.

Just as they came up to Study No. 10 Monty Lowther emerged. He had gone there from Glyn's study to get some string, and he was just returning when Figgins & Co. almost charged into him full-tilt.

"What the thump—"

Lowther grasped the position in a flash, and his words ceased abruptly. Five of the juniors were past him, but Figgins with his burden was a second too late.

Monty made a frantic grab at him, and his grasp closed on the arm of the guy, which was hanging grotesquely from the sheet.

The sudden jerk all but dragged the guy from Figgins' grasp, but not quite. Figgins gasped in alarm and attempted to wrench the guy from Lowther's grip. But Lowther was just as determined not to let go.

He hung on grimly, not daring to shout for help, fearing to bring someone in authority on the spot. But after a moment's struggling he decided to risk a shout, and was just opening his lips when, with startling abruptness, Figgins let go, and, dropping the guy, he scooted for his life along the passage after his chums who were already fleeing.

Lowther stared after them blankly for a brief moment, surprised that Figgins & Co. had caved in so easily. Then, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,029.

with a chuckle, he stooped and, wrapping the guy in the sheet again, he was just about to rush it towards Glyn's study when a step behind him caused him to wheel swiftly.

Then he understood why the New House fellows had bolted.

It was the Head!

Monty Lowther nearly fainted as he blinked at the awe-inspiring figure in cap and gown.

The Head stopped and eyed Lowther and his burden in surprise.

"Whatever have you there, my boy?" he asked, peering over the top of his glasses. "Bless my soul! It appears to be a—a a form—a human form! Good gracious! Lowther—"

Lowther almost collapsed with fear.

"It—it's a guy, sir!" he stammered feebly. "A—a guy!"

"Oh! Ah! Quite so, Lowther!" The Head's amazed and startled frown vanished and he laughed good-humouredly. "Of course, my boy! A guy—a Guy Fawkes guy, of course! You are just taking it down to the bonfire, Lowther?"

"I—I—I—" gasped Lowther.

"You should not have brought it into the House," said the Head, with mild reproof. "However, we must overlook little breaches of the rules to-day, Lowther, must we not? I trust you will have an enjoyable evening, my boy. But do be careful not to burn yourself!"

And with quite a genial smile Dr. Holmes continued his stately walk.

"My hat!" breathed Lowther, drawing a deep breath of relief. "What a jolly narrow escape—two jolly narrow escapes, in fact. Phew! I'd better get this johnnie out of sight in case the giddy Head returns. Phew!"

Gasping with relief, Monty Lowther rushed his burden into his own study; he did not dare risk taking the guy to Glyn's study in the circumstances. He dreaded the Head turning back.

In a flash he had shoved the effigy of Knox under the couch of Study No. 10, and then he hurried along to join his chums in Glyn's study, anxious to tell them what had happened. He had no fear of Figgins & Co. turning up again, with the Head prowling about.

And as Lowther vanished into Study No. 9 and the door closed upon him, the door of Study No. 7 opened wide, and Aubrey Racke darted out, his face ablaze with excitement and resolve.

Racke had witnessed all that had taken place in the passage, and a sudden idea had come to the vengeful junior—an idea that appealed strongly to the cad of the Shell; it took him by storm, in fact.

Without a second's hesitation he darted into Study No. 10. The couch was the only place where the guy could have been safely hidden, and in a moment Racke had reached it, and in another moment he had dragged out the effigy.

He picked it up and rushed it out of the study and into his own study. Then he closed the door, kicking it to with his foot.

"Good gad!" gasped Crooke, staring at his burden.

"What the dickens—"

"Shut up!" hissed Racke. "Here, help me shove this dashed thing under our couch."

"But I say, you know," stammered Crooke fearfully, "those chaps will half kill us—"

"Dry up, you funk!" snapped Racke, his eyes glittering. "I've got a wheeze—the wheeze of a lifetime—to get my own back out of those rotters—Glyn and all of them! And especially that sweep Lowther! He got me a thrashing, and I'm going to see he gets it hot! Come on—quick, you fool!"

Crooke hesitated, but as usual he had to give way to his chum, though he obviously "funked." But he did help, and in a few seconds Knox the Second was safely hidden under the couch in Racke's study.

When it was done, and Racke was satisfied, he coolly lit a cigarette.

"Now we'll wait until those chaps go down to the dashed bonfire," he said thickly, "and then we'll have the giddy place to ourselves, more or less. And then we'll fix up friend Lowther and his pals. Now, mind you play up, Crooke. Those fellows won't dream that we've got the giddy guy; but they'll probably come barging in to ask if we've seen it. We know absolutely nothing, mind you!"

Crooke nodded, and Racke chuckled softly as he puffed at his cigarette. His thoughts seemed to amuse him.

CHAPTER 12.

A Mystery!

"WHA-A-AT?" Bernard Glyn fairly glared at Lowther, who had just rushed into the study with his alarming news.

"It's a fact!" said Lowther breathlessly. "They fairly

barged into me in the passage. It's a wonder you fellows heard nothing."

"We were too jolly busy!" gasped Tom Merry, wiping a smoky, perspiring brow with a black hand. "But—but how the dickens did those New House worms know where the guy was kept?"

"That's the mystery!" said Lowther, eyeing his chums queerly. "They must have known, though. Somebody's given us away!"

"Who would?" said Tom Merry. "That's rot, Lowther! They've overheard somebody gassing, of course! But, my only hat! What a narrow escape of losing it! And what a narrow escape from the Head, too! Jove, you were lucky, Lowther!"

"I got the fright of my life!" groaned Lowther. "I thought the Head was going to ask to see the blessed guy. If he had done so—"

putting on his jacket. "No good washing or cleaning up," he added, with a grin. "We'll be black as sweeps by the time we come in again. Glyn and I had better see to the giddy guy, and you fellows can cart the stuff down. You've got the rope, Glyn?"

"Yes; I'll see to that. We'll lower it down through the window and some of us can be waiting in the quad to collar it when it's lowered down. That's the safest way."

"Wonder where that ass Gussy is?" snorted Blake. "Fancy a fellow being afraid to spoil his clobber on Bonfire Night! The—the tailor's dummy!"

"Blow Gussy!" snorted Glyn. "Now, let's get a move on."

And the juniors got a "move on." While the rest finished packing the fireworks, Tom Merry and Glyn hurried along to Study No. 10 to get the guy from under the couch.

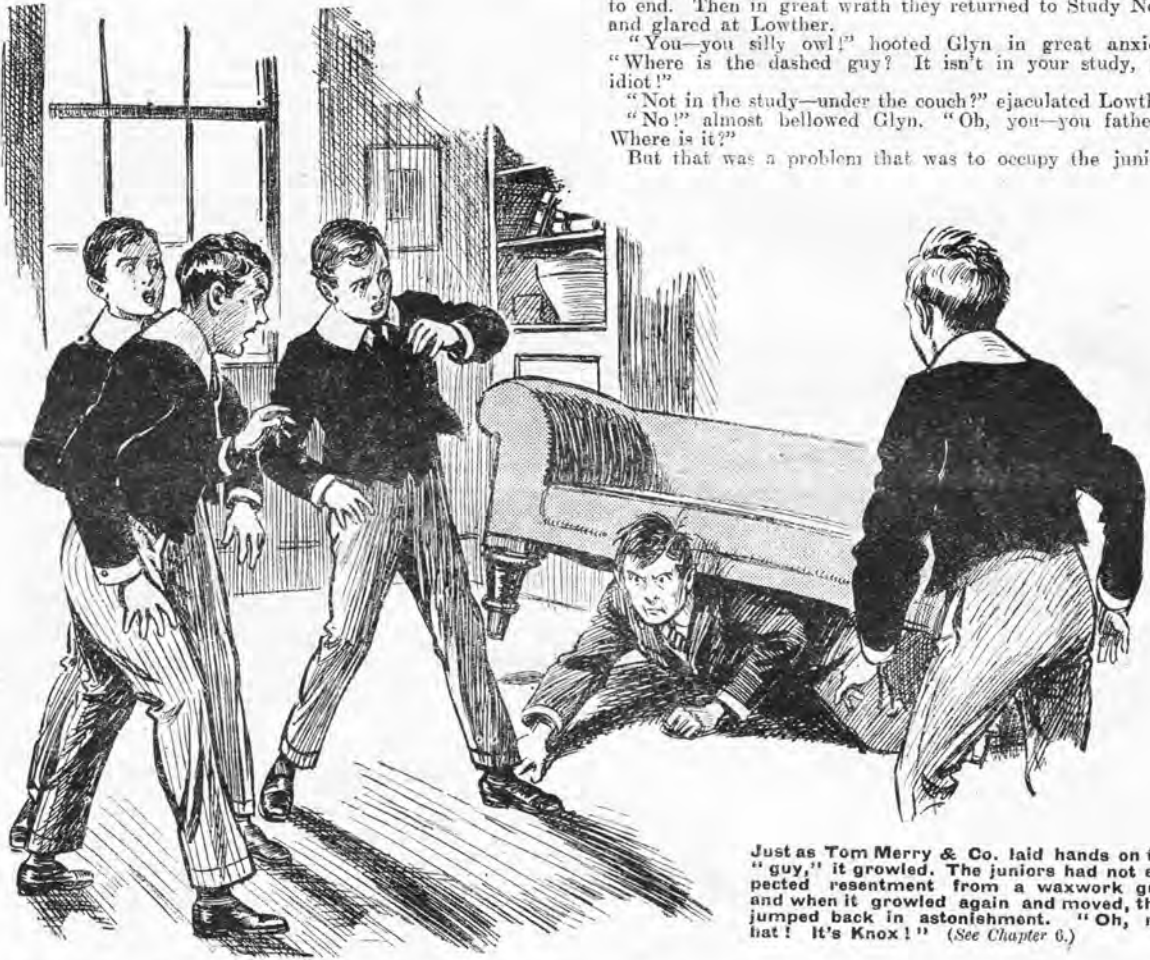
But there was no guy under the couch. They looked and looked, after which they searched the study from end to end. Then in great wrath they returned to Study No. 9 and glared at Lowther.

"You—silly owl!" hooted Glyn in great anxiety. "Where is the dashed guy? It isn't in your study, you idiot!"

"Not in the study—under the couch?" ejaculated Lowther.

"No!" almost bellowed Glyn. "Oh, you—you fathead! Where is it?"

But that was a problem that was to occupy the juniors'



Just as Tom Merry & Co. laid hands on the "guy," it growled. The juniors had not expected resentment from a waxwork guy, and when it growled again and moved, they jumped back in astonishment. "Oh, my hat! It's Knox!" (See Chapter 6.)

"The fat would have been in the fire with a vengeance," said Tom Merry. "This beats the band! Those New House worms have a nerve, though, and no mistake! You're sure they've gone, Monty?"

"You bet!" said Monty. "They went off like streaks of lightning when they spotted the Head. I suppose they got in through the lower box-room window. And I bet they nuzzled out that way, too! We've been lucky, chaps!"

"And the guy's under the couch in your study?" said Glyn. "You're sure of that?"

"Quite!" said Lowther, with a grin.

"You ought to have yanked it in here, anyway," sported Bernard Glyn. "My hat! I shall almost feel glad when that giddy guy's gone up in smoke and sparks!"

"I was afraid the Head might turn back and ask to see it," growled Lowther. "I was standing just by our study door and I just hopped inside with it. It's safe enough there, you ass!"

"Well, the Head will have gone by this," said Glyn, still worrying. "I vote we fetch it now. We've about finished now, anyway, and I expect most of the chaps have already gone down to the bonfire. I vote we make a start."

"About time," said Tom Merry, glancing at his watch and

minds for quite a long time that evening. They hunted high and they hunted low. Nobody had seen the guy. Racke and Crooke were quite sarcastic about it. They pretended to think the juniors were attempting to pull their legs.

Their remarks on the subject were so innocent and disarming that the wrathful and anxious juniors did not trouble scarcely to glance about the study. They went out and continued the search on the Fourth passage.

But it was very soon evident that the guy was indeed gone; or so they imagined.

Nobody had seen it!

It had vanished utterly, and the juniors imagined they knew how.

"It's clear enough!" groaned Glyn wrathfully. "Those New House chaps can't have gone. They must have been hiding, and they must have seen you cart it into Study No. 10. Then, when you came to us, they slipped along and pinched it. We've been done brown! I bet the cads are dancing round it now at the bonfire!"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry, giving a sudden start. "What about that awful ass, Gussy?"

"Eh? What about that idiot?" snorted Glyn.

"You remember what he did when he found the guy under the couch before? He took it along to the box-room and shoved it in the cupboard to teach us a lesson for being careless, as he called it. Suppose the awful dummy has found it again and taken the dashed thing along to the cupboard again."

"Phew! That's it for a pension!"

The theory was certainly worth investigating. They discussed it for a brief moment, and then, reaching the conclusion that Tom was right, they rushed along to the box-room.

Tom jerked open the door and hurriedly struck a match. Then, even as the gas flared, Tom jumped—they all jumped violently. For from the cupboard came a sudden banging and thudding, followed by a voice—a voice hoarse with suppressed rage.

"Let me out! Let me out, you young scoundrels! By James, but you'll suffer for this!"

"Mum-my hat!"

The scared juniors fairly blinked at the cupboard door. To hear the muffled, raging voice of Knox the First coming from the box in which they imagined Knox the Second was hidden was certainly startling, to say the least of it.

Tom Merry's jaw dropped.

"What—what the— G-good lor!" he gasped. "It—it's Knox himself! It—it must be!"

"Oh crickey!"

As in a dream Tom crossed to the door of the cupboard and turned the key in the lock. It would, perhaps, have been safer and better for them had he not done so. For Knox would be certain to blame them for his captivity; as Tom realised when too late.

But he did it. The key turned, and next moment the door flew back and Knox fairly tumbled out.

"Look out!" gasped Blake. "Oh, my hat!"

The warning was very necessary, for even as he found his feet Gerald Knox gave a roar of rage and made a savage rush for the juniors.

They surged out of the box-room doorway and flew, Knox raging at their heels.

Past their own study they went with a desperate rush; Knox looked far too dangerous to stop and argue with. But the prefect did not follow far. He was stiff and aching from his crouched and cramped position in the stuffy cupboard, and he stopped at last.

Retracing his steps, he went to his own study. He knew he would "get" his victims sooner or later. And in any case, he would report them; he had a very good case this time, or he imagined he had.

"Phew!" panted Tom Merry, as they halted, breathless and dismayed. "This beats the giddy band, and no mistake! How on earth did Knox get inside that dashed cupboard, you fellows?"

"Ask me another!" groaned Lowther. "I'm getting a bit fed-up with mysteries. And life is getting a bit too exciting, anyway."

"Yes, rather! We're for it now, though; Knox is bound to say we locked him in there."

"Oh dear!"

"No good croaking about it yet, though," said Tom. "Keep smiling! Besides, we're jolly well not going to miss the bonfire and fun, guy or no guy. Come on; we're late as it is. And blow Knox!"

"Hear, hear!"

The juniors were beginning to be a bit tired of Knox the Second, and Knox the First also. They only wanted to get down to the bonfire now and enjoy themselves. Already they could hear distant shouts and a medley of crackling and banging, whilst a lurid glow suddenly lit up the windows of the School House.

The bonfire was lit. The fun had commenced.

"Come on!" said Tom. "The fellows will be waiting for us and blessing us no end!"

There was no doubt about that, and, though it went sorely against the grain, Glyn was obliged to bite the bullet and put all thoughts of his precious and missing guy from his mind. Moreover, they knew now that Gussy had not put the guy back in the cupboard, and their suspicions that the New House fellows had raided it were intensified.

"If they've got the dashed thing," said Tom Merry, in a wrathful growl, "we'll jolly well soon get it back again, never fear. There's going to be trouble at the bonfire, if they have got it."

"My hat, yes!"

The thought of a possible scrap to regain possession of the guy raised the juniors' spirits wonderfully, and they hurriedly gathered the fireworks together and made for the quad—or all did, with the exception of Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry did not discover that his chum was not with

them until they had left the school, and then he gave a gasp.

"Where's that ass Lowther? Blessed if I can see him anywhere!"

Manners chuckled.

"It's all right," he grinned. "Monty's stayed behind for a few seconds. He's going to change Linton's bed-room candle for a Chinese cracker. He's making the most of his chance while Linton's down at the bonfire—if he is there, though it's pretty certain he will be."

"Oh, the awful idiot!" gasped Tom Merry. "Well, if the silly chump wants to risk a licking, let him!"

And Tom dismissed his chum from his mind for the moment. The next minute the juniors reached the scene of the bonfire. And a jolly noisy scene it was. The fire gleamed red against the November sky, and the cheery crackling of the flames rose above the shouts and yelling and banging of cannons and fizzing of squibs. A giant rocket went soaring up into the dusky sky as the belated juniors hurried up.

Then they became aware that the procession had started and that there was trouble of some sort going on also. The yells and catcalls and shouts were ear-splitting.

It did not take Tom Merry & Co. long to see the reason.

The procession seemed to be chiefly composed of New House juniors and fags. At their head marched a band composed of instruments made with paper and combs chiefly. Behind them came several torch-bearers, their excited faces showing clearly in the lurid glow. Behind these came not one guy but two!

The first was a very wobbly figure made of stuffed straw, with a mask. It wore a battered mortar-board and gown, and on the face of the mask had been painted side-whiskers. The juniors, at all events, knew that the guy represented Mr. Ratcliff, the tyrannical Housemaster of the New House.

Then came another "guy," also borne on a "litter" made from a chair and two Scout staves. And as they glimpsed the guy, a gasp of amazement came from the School House juniors.

No; it wasn't Knox the Second at all! It was much smaller than Knox, and it was dressed in ordinary Etons, with a battered topper on its head. The face appeared to have been painted a vivid green, while a glimmering eye-glass was stuck in one eye.

It also appeared to be alive, for it was struggling frantically, making the bearers stagger about as they walked. And from the mouth of this guy came shrieks of wrath and fear.

"Yawwoooogh! You feahful wottahs, let me down this instant! Wescue School House—wescue! Oh, bai Jove! Yawwoooogh!"

And the guy shrieked again as the litter wobbled violently.

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at it in astonishment. They understood now what all the row was about, and why a score of School House fellows were making desperate attacks on the procession.

"What—what—what—" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"It's Gussy!" howled Blake in great and overwhelming wrath. "They've got old Gussy! Oh, the—the cads!"

It was true enough. The hapless guy tied to the litter was none other than the unfortunate Arthur Augustus. It had come about simply enough. As Figgins & Co. were making their "getaway" from the School House they had barged full into Arthur Augustus just outside the lower box-room door. In that instant the idea had come to Figgins. If they could not have the School House guy, then they would make one out of a School House fellow. And who better than Arthur Augustus?

On the instant Figgy had whispered his wheeze to his chum, and before he knew what was happening the unfortunate Arthur Augustus had been rushed into the box-room, and the door closed. Then he was tied up like a sack, despite his struggles and yells, and lowered by the rope to the ground.

Then they had rooted out some paint, a battered topper, and the chair and staves, and the rest had been easy. And now here poor old Gussy was—fairly "guyed."

For a single instant the chums of Arthur Augustus gazed at the scene, and then they charged to the attack with roars of rage.

The next moment the fun was fast and furious.

The addition of such redoubtable fighters as Tom Merry & Co. and Bernard Glyn & Co. was more than enough to turn the tide.

The procession surged and shook, and then it broke in two, and both guys disappeared amid the melee, weird and alarming shrieks coming from the invisible Arthur Augustus.

But the New House were outnumbered now, and the fight was brief. In a very few minutes Tom Merry & Co. had fought their way to the spot where Gussy lay yelling, and very soon he was released.

The fight did not continue long after that, for suddenly Kildare and Darrell and several other seniors waded in

with their ashplants, and, amid howls and yells, the combatants broke and separated.

Tom Merry found himself sitting hugging a swollen eye, whilst opposite him sat Figgins on the grass, hugging a swollen nose.

"Oh, you—you rotter!" gasped Tom Merry. "You—you rotter, Figgy!"

"Same to you, and many of 'em!" panted Figgins, grinning feebly. "Never mind! We weren't going to see you fellows have a monopoly of giddy guys. We jolly nearly collared yours, as it was, and we made sure of one guy by collaring old Gussy!"

"You mean to say you haven't got our guy?" snorted Tom, in some disbelief.

"Eh? No! We would have done but for that ass Lowther, though!" gasped Figgins, scrambling up. "Look here! Who is your blessed guy meant to be, you rotter? We didn't get a chance to see it. Was it me?"

"Of course it wasn't!" hooted Tom Merry. "It was that cad Knox! We never dreamed of making it you!"

"Oh! Oh, my hat!" gasped Figgins, whilst a chuckle went up. "Sorry I made a guy of old Gussy, then. If I'd known it was that beast Knox I wouldn't have dreamed of chipping in. But where is it?"

"The guy?"

"Yes. Lowther had it when we bunked!"

"That's what we want to know!" hooted Glyn, joining in the discussion. "Lowther says he shoved it under his study couch. But when we looked for it the dashed thing had vanished, and though we've hunted high and low, we can't find it anywhere. If you fellows did take it—"

"We didn't, I tell you!" said Figgins, rubbing his nose ruefully. "Last we saw of it Lowther had it. But, blow it now. I say, let's make it pax, and you fellows can help us burn old Ratty. And we'll have some fun together!"

"All right!" said Tom grinning. "We'll make it pax. If we don't, I can see Railton ordering us all back to school. Pass the word round, chaps! The hatchet's buried for to-night."

And the word was passed round, and after that School House and New House joined together quite amicably in the Fun of the Fifth. Glyn's specialities were handed round, and, with the bonfire at its height now, the effigy of Mr. Ratcliff was hunted for. It was found at length, though it was in a very sad state, having been trampled under dozens of feet during that hectic struggle. But it was still more or less recognisable as a guy, and, amid jeers and catcalls, it was flung on the bonfire, and a sea of sparks went skywards amid an earsplitting din.

By this time even Arthur Augustus had recovered his good-humour somewhat, and, though he refused to dance round the bonfire, having his lofty dignity to consider, he looked round with a rather patronising smile, and he even unbent so far as to send a couple of rockets soaring skywards.

But all things come to an end some time, and when the last squib had fizzled away, and when the whistle blew for the juniors to return to school, they all went back smoke-begrimed, many of them singed and burned, but all of them happy. And the happiest among them were Tom Merry & Co., having quite forgotten their disappointment over the effigy of Knox of the Sixth, and they swarmed back, cheery and very tired, but little dreaming of the shock in store for them. That was to come only too soon.

CHAPTER 13.

The Final Explosion I

"B LESS my soul!"

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was astonished.

He had been down to watch the bonfire, and he had stayed until the last, having quite enjoyed the spectacle—if not the noise.

Not all the masters at St. Jim's had done so, by any means. Mr. Ratcliff, for instance, had stayed in his study with closed windows and cotton wool stuffed in his ears; while Mr. Selby had also stayed in, fairly seething with wrath, and vowing vengeance on the heads of those who had thrown the jumping crackers down his study chimney earlier on that evening.

Whether he ever discovered the culprits or not, Mr. Selby had his own suspicions, and it was fairly certain that Wally D'Arcy & Co. of the Third would have a warm time in class the next morning.

But Mr. Linton, though a strict disciplinarian, was not a bad old gentleman, and he also felt cheerful when he entered the School House and made his way up to his room.

It was then that he found cause to be astonished. For his door was locked, with the key in the outside.

It seemed a very extraordinary thing, for Mr. Linton scarcely remembered ever having had cause to lock his door. He himself had certainly not left the door locked before going down to the bonfire field.

But it was locked now undoubtedly.

"What is the matter, Mr. Linton?" said Mr. Railton, coming along just then.

"It is nothing of much moment, Mr. Railton," said the Shell master. "I find that my door is locked, with the key in the outside, and I certainly did not lock it myself. And I am wondering— Bless my soul! I do believe there is someone in the room!"

It certainly seemed so; Mr. Railton also had heard a movement within the room. Without waiting for Mr. Linton to make a move, Mr. Railton suddenly twisted the key and flung the door open. It had occurred to him that it was more than possible, as it was Bonfire Night, that some misguided and daring youth had been up to tricks in the room.

He had good reason to think so the next moment. For as the door opened and the light shot into the dark room a youthful figure darted from the room—or attempted to do so. But Mr. Railton was a trifle too wide-awake. His hand shot out, and the next moment a junior with a scared face was wriggling in the Housemaster's strong grasp.

"Lowther!" said Mr. Railton calmly. "No; it is useless to attempt to escape, my boy. Be still!"

And Monty Lowther was still—for it was that hapless joker right enough. He stood gasping, his face showing clearly his alarm.

As he stood there Mr. Railton's hand went round the doorknob, feeling for the electric switch. There followed a click, but that was all.

"The—the light isn't on, sir," stammered Lowther. "I think the globe has been taken off."

"So it seems, Lowther," observed the Housemaster grimly. "Well, what does this mean? How come you to be locked in this room—your Form master's private apartment, Lowther?"

Lowther flushed, but did not reply for a moment. He was only too anxious to know how he had come to be locked in himself—or, at least, who had locked him in, and what it meant.

(Continued overleaf.)



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For Lowther had had rather an unpleasant adventure that evening. As he had mentioned to Manners, he intended to change the candle in Mr. Linton's room for a cracker—certainly a reckless and foolish joke.

But things had gone wrong for Monty.

He had got inside the room all right armed with the cracker, and, having gently pushed the door nearly shut, he had felt his way into the room and had fumbled in his pocket for a match, in order to see what he was doing.

It was just as Lowther made the discovery that he had come without matches that the surprising thing had happened.

Without warning the door behind him had closed, and, to Lowther's alarm, he had heard the click of the lock. He was locked in—truly an alarming discovery for the practical joker.

Even then, however, Lowther was not overmuch alarmed, and he had fumbled his way to the electric light switch and pressed it. It was then he discovered that the globe was missing, and it was then he began to suspect that he had been trapped.

Lowther was seriously alarmed by this time, and he had frantically tried the door, and had shaken it and even thumped upon it. But no answer had come. Whoever had locked him in had departed, apparently.

In complete darkness—for, though the blind was up, it was misty and black outside, and velvety black inside—Lowther had then started to feel round for the candlestick, hoping to find matches in it.

But, though his fumbling hands found the candlestick on the mantel, he found no matches.

Lowther had then shouted, risking all. But it was useless; for the only persons indoors by that time were shut up in their studies. Nobody heard him, apparently, nor did he manage to make anyone hear through the window.

He was a prisoner, and he was obliged to remain a prisoner for what seemed ages to the scared junior. And then had come the sound of someone at the door; and as it was flung open by Mr. Railton, Lowther had made a dash for liberty, hoping against hope that he would get clear without being recognised.

It had proved a vain hope—as the hapless joker realised as he now stood before the Housemaster and the astounded Mr. Linton.

"Well, Lowther," went on Mr. Railton icily, "I am awaiting your explanation. One moment, however! You will remain where you are, Lowther. We must have a light, Mr. Linton."

"Certainly, Mr. Railton!" gasped Mr. Linton. "This is most—most amazing."

In silence the hapless Lowther waited while Mr. Railton went into the next room and returned with an electric light globe. By this time several curious fellows were staring into the room. In the feeble light of a match held by Mr. Linton he fitted the globe, and a flood of light lit up the bed-room.

And as it did so Mr. Linton gave a cry—a cry of utter amazement. It was echoed next second by Mr. Railton, and an instant later by Lowther himself. There were several gasps from the doorway. Tom Merry & Co. had come along quite by accident, and they were just in time to see the astonishing sight.

For Mr. Linton's bed was occupied. And it was apparently occupied by Gerald Knox, fully dressed, and with a cigarette in his mouth.

Only Lowther and the scared juniors round the doorway knew that it was Knox the Second, however. Lowther had the biggest shock of all as he sighted it. He had been in the room for ages, and yet he had been quite ignorant of what the bed contained.

"G-good gracious!" articulated Mr. Linton. "Weil, upon my word! Mr. Railton—"

Mr. Railton was eyeing the still figure in the bed in dumbfounded amazement. The body was covered by the bedclothes up to the neck, and only the waxwork face, the clothed arms, and the waxwork features were visible. But they looked amazingly lifelike.

"Knox!" stuttered the Housemaster. "Knox— Bless my soul! How—how dare you! Never have I heard of such—such astounding impudence! How dare you occupy Mr. Linton's bed! Are you mad, or—pr intoxicated? How— Ah!"

Something about the glassy stare of the eyes had caught the keen gaze of the Housemaster, and he stepped towards the bed and peered closer. Then his face went grim.

"It is merely a waxwork figure, Mr. Linton!" he exclaimed, giving the stupefied Lowther a curious glance. "But it is most remarkably lifelike. And it is an extraordinarily clever effigy of Knox. And—"

Again Mr. Railton paused, his keen eyes being attracted this time by a big sheet of cardboard pinned up above the head of the bed—though it was surprising he had not seen it before. At all events, it could scarcely be missed, nor could the words on it, which were printed in big capitals. And they read as follows:

"TWO MORE GUYS!"

LINTON THE TYRANT

AND

KNOX THE BULLY!"

As he read the lettering Mr. Railton's face went dark, while Mr. Linton jumped, his own features pink with outraged wrath.

"Oh, great pip!" breathed Tom Merry in the doorway. "That's torn it! Now for trouble! Oh, that awful idiot, Lowther!"

The same suspicion had occurred to Glyn and the others, and they looked at Lowther, staggered at the thought that he was responsible for this amazing insult and outrage to their Form master. They could scarcely believe it possible. Yet—

This explained why their precious guy was missing! Lowther had actually spoofed them—worse than spoofed them. He had apparently hidden the guy somewhere else, and had returned later, not to change Mr. Linton's candle merely, but to do this when the coast was clear.

It seemed amazing. Reckless practical joker that Lowther undoubtedly was, his chums could scarcely believe him capable of this.

But it was very clear that Mr. Railton and Mr. Linton did.

The hapless Lowther trembled as he met their looks.

"Lowther!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, his voice vibrant with anger. "This is the most abominable and insulting outrage on a master and prefect I have ever come across in my scholastic experience! I am well aware that you yourself did not manufacture this—this effigy of Knox. It is obviously the work of a certain junior in your Form, whom I shall question later," he added grimly, giving the unfortunate Bernard Glyn a grim glance. "It seems clear that you yourself only are responsible for this—this disgraceful piece of astounding insolence, or you would not be found locked alone in the room!"

"I—I didn't put the guy in the bed, sir!" gasped Lowther. "I—I know nothing about it being there. I've been in the dark here all the time, and I didn't even know it was in here, sir."

"Nonsense! What has happened seems perfectly obvious to me. You entered the room and placed the effigy in the bed, and while in the room you were locked in by someone."

"I—I didn't!" panted Lowther, going white as he began to realise the serious view the Housemaster was taking of the matter. "I swear I know nothing about it—about the figure being brought in here, sir."

"Nonsense!" repeated the Housemaster sternly.

"But—but the light, sir—that will prove I didn't play the trick. Whoever took the globe—"

"That can very easily be explained, I have no doubt, Lowther," said Mr. Railton, setting his lips tightly. "It would be a simple matter for you to have removed it beforehand, for reasons best known to yourself, or you could have thrown it through the window. That detail will be gone into later, however. I would advise you not to be so stupid as to suppose that your denials will be accepted."

"I didn't—"

"Kindly be silent, Lowther! Kildare, will you help me to take this wretched dummy from Mr. Linton's bed?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Kildare.

He pushed his way through the staring crowd in the doorway. The next moment, Mr. Railton grasped the bed-

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Mr. Railton grasped the figure on the bed, and instantly there was a whirl of hidden mechanism and a deafening crash! The bulky chest of "Knox the Second" was blown clean out by a terrific explosion! (See Chapter 13.)

clothes and flung them back. Then he grasped the body of the effigy, whilst Kildare grasped the feet.

Apparently, the Housemaster imagined the figure was much heavier than it actually was—though he never got the chance to find out just how light it was, for in that instant something happened—something that even Bernard Glyn was not expecting.

As Mr. Railton grasped the body of the figure—not at all gently—a curious ticking sound became audible—emanating from Knox the Second's chest.

Glyn gave a sudden gasp, but he was much too late to attempt to prevent what happened next.

For even as Mr. Railton and Kildare started back in alarm, the ticking ceased suddenly, and then—

BANG!

It was a truly terrific explosion, and it seemed to blow the rather bulky chest of Knox the Second clean out. It did more, for next instant that first bang was followed by a series of bangs and cracklings and fizzings, and then out from the burst-open waistcoat of the effigy a perfect cascade of fireworks whizzed—rip-raps, crackers of various kinds, catherine-wheels, rockets, and roman candles, and "golden rain" and coloured fire.

Something had obviously gone wrong with Glyn's wonderful "electrically-timed detonator"—possibly the angry shaking by Mr. Railton had "done it." At all events, it was done.

Possibly, the scene would have been more impressive had the electric light not been burning, but it was quite impressive enough for all concerned.

It was also more than alarming, for the sparks were being scattered all about the room in a highly dangerous manner. Cries of alarm arose on all sides as a rocket soared upwards and struck the curtains. The next moment a scene of wild confusion reigned in the room, amid an uproar of excited shouting and the fizzing, crackling and banging of the fireworks.

The curtains were alight and blazing in a flash, and Kildare jumped forward and started to tear them down recklessly. Then the bedclothes became alight in several places, to add to the general alarm.

Mr. Railton scattered the crowd round the doorway unceremoniously as he dashed out for the fire-appliances in the passage. But Tom Merry and Blake had already rushed off for them, and Mr. Railton met them returning with the two cylinders in their hands.

He snatched the one Blake carried and rushed into the room, with Tom Merry close at his heels. In a flash the cylinders were spouting their contents of chemicals on to the flames.

It was over very quickly—fortunately, the flames had no time to get a hold. Kildare was stamping out the last burning scraps of the curtains, whilst Darrell gave his attention to the bed. Lowther and several others were stamping out sparks on the carpet and rugs.

The last of the fireworks had already spluttered out, and it was just then that the scared swarm round the doorway and in the passage parted, again—this time to admit the Head.

Dr. Holmes came in, staring in great alarm at the room, still half full of acrid smoke and the smudged and blackened faces of excited occupants of the room. He jumped as he sighted the fire-appliances.

"Good heavens, Mr. Railton, what has happened? There—there has been a fire—"

"It is not very serious, sir, though it might easily have proved to be very serious indeed," said Mr. Railton grimly.

"Good heavens!"

Dr. Holmes had suddenly caught sight of the waxwork figure lying in a grotesque attitude on the carpet. Fortunately, the head of Knox's double was turned away, or the Head might have got a more severe shock than he did. But Mr. Railton hastened to settle his fears.

"It is merely a waxwork figure, sir—an effigy of Knox of the Sixth!"

"Wha-at?"

"It is a guy manufactured by Glyn of the Fourth, sir!" said Mr. Railton sternly. "It was to have been used in the

bonfire celebrations to-night, I imagine. Another boy—Lowther, of the Shell—however, obtained the guy in some way, and," proceeded the Housemaster, his voice trembling with indignation, "he actually placed it in Mr. Linton's bed, pinning that insulting notice above it."

And Mr. Railton pointed to the sheet of cardboard above the bed, and explained to Dr. Holmes briefly what had happened. The Head's face grew grimmer and grimmer as he listened. He turned a thunderous frown on the hapless Lowther as Mr. Railton called him forward.

"It isn't true, sir!" panted Lowther.

"What?"

"I mean that it's a mistake to say I did it, sir," said the Shell joker, realising now what a terrible hole he was in. "I did not place that effigy in the bed at all. I know absolutely nothing about it being placed there."

"Lowther—" began Mr. Railton angrily.

"I don't care; I'm speaking the truth!" said Lowther desperately. "I admit that I entered the room to play a trick on Mr. Linton."

"So you admit that now, Lowther?" snapped the Housemaster.

"Yes, sir. I came in to change Mr. Linton's candle for a—cracker. It was a silly joke, I know. But somebody else must have played this other trick and—and locked me in to bear the brunt of it."

It sounded a feeble defence—far too feeble to be at all convincing, as Lowther himself realised with a sinking heart. Yet what other defence could he offer?

A glance at the Head's face showed him at once that he was disbelieved and already condemned.

"That will do, Lowther!" said the Head quietly. "I am deeply grieved that this should ever have taken place—that a boy of St. Jim's could have insulted his Form master in this manner. That alone is a very serious matter. But you have also broken the rules of this school, and by your reckless, monstrous act have caused a fire which might have had very grave consequences. Expulsion is the least punishment I can inflict for such folly and outrageous behaviour."

"But—but, sir—" stammered Lowther, white-lipped.

"That will do!" said the Head, raising his hand. "I will hear in the morning anything further you may have to say. I can hold out no hope, however, that any excuse you offer will be accepted. The evidence seems to me quite conclusive. I myself met you carrying an effigy in the Shell passage this evening, and I supposed that you were carrying

it out of doors. I certainly did not dream of the truth, nor did I suspect that the effigy represented a prefect of this school. I would strongly advise you to confess to me when I go into the matter in the morning."

"Please listen to me, sir!" panted Lowther.

"Silence! Mr. Railton, will you kindly see that Lowther is confined for the night in the punishment-room? Mr. Linton, I will arrange for you to have another room for the night, as it is obviously impossible for you to sleep in this room."

"Very good, sir!" stammered Mr. Linton.

With that the Head glanced round the room keenly, and then he departed, ordering Kildare as he marched out to disperse the crowd.

And the crowd of juniors did disperse, buzzing with excitement and discussing the astounding affair in excited and scared tones. It was the most exciting ending to a bonfire night they ever remembered—and all agreed that it was a beastly ending.

With feelings too deep for words, Tom Merry & Co. saw their unfortunate chum escorted to the punishment-room by Mr. Railton, and their hearts were heavy as they saw the door closed and locked upon him.

They simply did not know what to think. They had never known their chum to lie, and his denials had been stout enough. Yet what were his chums to think?

But by bed-time Tom and Manners at least had come to a decision in the matter. They were convinced that Lowther had not lied. The Head had stated that the evidence seemed conclusive, and even now they simply could not understand it. But the evidence was wrong—must be wrong. There was a dreadful mistake somewhere—or else there had been clever trickery of which their chum was the victim. At all events, Tom Merry and Manners were resolved to be loyal to their chum: and to accept his word that he was innocent.

The faces of Lowther's chums were miserable, and their hearts heavy when they went to bed that night. In the Shell dormitory one bed was empty—Lowther's bed—and they wondered if it would ever be occupied again by the fun-loving joker of the Shell, who had been brought face to face with disgrace and expulsion on that memorable Fifth.

THE END.



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(Introduction on page 26.)

Sentenced!

"ONE moment, sir!" said Jimmy Silver coolly. "I think Carthew said his assailants wore robes and masks and cowls. Have they been found yet?"

Mr. Dalton started.

And the Head gave "Uncle James" of Rookwood a glance.

"They have not, Silver."

"Until they are I don't think that stick is enough to condemn Lovell on," said Jimmy grimly.

The Head paused.

The Fourth waited with bated breath for his decision.

"I certainly think there is something in what Silver avers," said Mr. Dalton quietly. "The robes and cowls have not been found, Dr. Chisholm. Had they been in the study—"

"I should have found them," said Mr. Greely decidedly.

Dr. Chisholm nodded slowly. He gave Lovell a glance of doubt.

"There is still a grave element of doubt," he admitted. "And until more definite proof is forthcoming we cannot arrive at a decision. Can I trust you to make every inquiry, Mr. Dalton?"

"Assuredly, sir."

"Very good! The matter will stand in abeyance pending further proof. In the meantime, Lovell, you will be confined to the punishment-room—"

"But, sir—"

"I cannot overlook the extreme seriousness of your situation," said Dr. Chisholm coldly. "Will you see that this boy takes his place in the punishment-room at once, Mr. Greely?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Silver, Raby, and Newcome, you will remain under suspicion," said the Head. "I advise you to remain within call of my study."

Jimmy Silver's face was grim as the Head nodded and left the Form-room.

With him, with Mr. Greely's eye on him, went Arthur Edward Lovell—suspected of a dastardly act, and confined on suspicion to the punishment-room!

An instantaneous buzz followed the closing of the Form-room door.

Even the presence of their Form master could not stop the Fourth Form expressing their feelings at that moment.

Lovell, of all fellows, confined to the punishment-room—under suspicion of having attacked Carthew! It was unthinkable; ridiculous, in fact. Lovell was the last fellow to adopt underhand methods against a foe. Yet the Head evidently more than half believed in his guilt, and in the guilt of Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome; though at present there was no evidence against them.

Mr. Dalton opened his mouth to speak, but closed it again. He realised that he was powerless to quell that hubbub.

"It's rot, I tell you!" shouted Gunner, leaping on to a form. "Lovell's one of the straightest chaps in the Form, and we all know it!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Gunner's right this time!"

It was not often that the Fourth were in agreement with Cuthbert Gunner, but they were with him almost to a man now.

"By gad! Are we goin' to stand by an' see Lovell punished for what some slinking rotter has done?" exclaimed Mornington, his eyes gleaming. "We know it wasn't Lovell—so it comes to this. Some crawling cad with a grudge against both Carthew and Lovell hid the stick where Dr. Chisholm found it, intendin' all the time that the fellows in the End Study should get the blame. Is that good enough for the Fascists?"

"No!" came a roar that shook the Form-room.

"Then what are we goin' to do? I suggest holdin' an inquisition here an' now, to find out whether any fellow is in Lovell's position—unable to prove where he was yesterday afternoon. What do you fellows think of that?"

"Carried unanimously!" shouted Conroy.

"Boys—" began Mr. Dalton, his face growing grimmer.

"Sorry, sir," said Mornington coolly. "This is rather a serious matter, I think you'll admit."

"Very serious indeed," agreed Mr. Dalton dryly. "And still more serious when Fourth Form boys forget that they are in their Form-room, and under their Form master's orders!"

"But, sir—"

"I have heard enough," rapped Mr. Dalton sharply. "I shall cane the next boy who raises his voice. You are fortunate in that I excuse your initial outburst. If you have anything to say, Mornington, it can wait till you are dismissed. You will construe next, please."

For a moment, Valentine Mornington breathed hard.

But he saw the wisdom of Mr. Dalton's words, and began to construe.

There was comparative order in the Fourth Form-room till dismissal.

But at the word, the Fourth rose as a man and followed Jimmy Silver and Mornington into the corridor.

"Meetin' in the Common-room," shouted Mornington. "Any fellow who cuts will be suspected first. Bear that in mind, Lattrey!"

"Hang you, I'm going out for a stroll!" snapped Lattrey.

"You're not. You're comin' with us!" corrected Mornington coolly. "Take his other arm, Jimmy. Oh, my hat! Stop him!"

Mark Lattrey did not wait for Jimmy Silver to take his other arm. He broke suddenly for the stairs, and half a dozen juniors, at Mornington's cry, broke after him.

"Let me go, hang you! Make them let me go, Silver,"

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you cad! If you think I had anythin' to do with Carthew, you're a suspicious fool!"

"You're bringing suspicion on yourself by acting like this," said Jimmy quietly.

"Hang you! Will you let me go?"

"Come along to the meeting," suggested "Uncle James" tactfully. "You've nothing to fear."

"I won't!"

"Look here, you chaps!" ejaculated Mornington. "Isn't this a bit queer? Lattrey's in the bluest of blue funks at the prospect of an investigation. By gad, we'll question him first!"

"Lattrey's got the wind up!" howled Tubby Muffin, from the outskirts of the crowd.

"Funking!" boomed Gunner grimly. "What over? 'Fraid of being found out, you rotter?"

"You—you cads!" panted Lattrey, beside himself with anger and fear. "I—I know nothing whatever about it, I tell you!"

"Not good enough!" snapped Mornington decisively. "Yank him along to his study, you chaps. We'll search the place before holdin' the meetin'—it may not be necessary!"

"Yank the cad along!"

"Up you come!" roared Gunner, getting a grip on Lattrey's coat collar.

Lattrey's face was white with fear now. But he set his lips. He had to go through with it now. Discovery could only mean one thing, and that expulsion from Rookwood. The latter thought steadily his quivering nerves.

He had no choice about going. A surging crowd bore him along the corridor, and Mornington threw open the door of the study which he shared with Peele and Gower.

Peele and Gower were on the fringe of the juniors, and they were careful to remain there. If any incriminating evidence was found in Study No. 5 they were perfectly willing to leave Lattrey to explain how it came there. And the expression of fury and fear on Lattrey's face encouraged them in the opinion that there might be.

"No time to stand on ceremony," rapped Mornington coolly. "Unlock your desk, Lattrey!"

"What do you expect to find in it, you cad?" snarled Lattrey.

"The robes an' cowl's are somewhere," said Mornington coolly. "Jimmy Silver pointed that out. They may be in the desk. Quick!"

"I refuse!" snapped Lattrey grimly. "If you open my desk, it will be without my permission, and you'll answer to the Head!"

"Two seconds!" said Mornington calmly. "After that we bust it open. Hand over that poker, Erroll."

"Here you are."

"Hold on. I—I'll open it!" gasped Lattrey.

"Sharp's the word, then."

Lattrey drew out a key, and threw up the lid of his desk. Mornington shoved him back, while Conroy and Erroll and Van Ryn turned out the contents on the floor.

Papers—pink racing papers—there were in profusion, and two packs of cards, and a number of odds and ends. A sheaf of papers, a school book or two, and a file emptied the desk.

Lattrey looked on with a sarcastic expression.

"Satisfied?" he demanded, as the last paper was turned out.

"Not by a long chalk!" snapped Mornington coolly. "Rout round the study, you men. Don't mind if you upset anything. Peele an' Gower won't mind, will you?"

"You dare—" began Peele, but a movement of the crowd silenced him.

Lattrey watched with a set, pale face while Conroy and Oswald and Erroll, and two or three more, routed round the study in search of clues. But the search came to an end without having revealed anything of value.

"Nothing doing, Morny," said Erroll at last.

"Not a clue," added Van Ryn.

Mornington bit his lip.

"Well?"

Lattrey was grinning now.

"We've drawn a blank," announced Mornington coolly.

"Though I still believe Lattrey— Oh gad!"

"What's all this?"

George Bulkeley of the Sixth, captain of the school, stood looking grimly into the study.

"Well, what's the meaning of this set out, Mornington?"

"Oh gad! We suspected Lattrey," gasped Mornington, the wind taken completely out of his sails for once.

"Why?"

"Suspicious character, you know," gasped Mornington unhappily. "But we've drawn a blank—searched the study, but nothin' has come to light."

"I should think not," said Bulkeley dryly, "considering that the real culprits have been discovered, beyond a doubt."

"What?"

"Who?" demanded Jimmy Silver, his face lighting up.

Bulkeley gave him a grim glance in return.

"Nothing for you to look relieved about, you young ruffian!" he snapped sternly. "You and Raby and Newcome—wanted in the Head's study at once!"

"But, Bulkeley—" ejaculated Jimmy Silver, his brain in a whirl.

"We didn't do it!" roared Newcome indignantly.

"Do you think we're that kind of rotten cowards, Bulkeley?" demanded Raby grimly. "You ought to know us better!"

"I thought I did," said Bulkeley sternly; "but it appears that I was mistaken. The Head has just searched the Fourth Form dormitory—"

"Well, and what if he has?"

"Robes and cowl's, made from sheets and pillow-slips, with black masks, have been found packed away at the bottoms of you three juniors' trunks," said Bulkeley coolly. "Come on! The Head's waiting."

"I tell you—" burst out Raby.

He got no further.

Bulkeley, out of patience, grasped his collar in a firm grasp, and Raby was forced out of the study. Jimmy Silver and Newcome, staggered and incapable of thought, followed as if in a dream.

They left a terrific and indignant buzz in their wake as they followed the school captain to the Head's study.

"Come in."

Bulkeley entered the study, and the three juniors followed. They found Arthur Edward Lovell already there, looking grim and sullen.

The Head rested his stern glance for a moment on their faces, and motioned Bulkeley to stand aside.

Jimmy Silver opened his mouth, but the words refused to come. The Head believed him guilty; and his own Form master, standing behind the Head, appeared to be looking through him.

"Silver, I have to inform you that fresh and conclusive evidence has come to light!"

The Head's voice was calm, but there was a stern and inflexible note in it. Jimmy Silver set his lips.

"There can be no evidence that Lovell or the rest of us had anything to do with the attack on Carthew," he responded firmly.

"You will do yourself no service by adhering to that statement, my boy," said Dr. Chisholm. "In the bottoms of your boxes robes and cowl's have come to light. Carthew, who is recovering slowly in the sanatorium, has seen them, and he affirms that they were worn by his assailants yesterday. Coupled with this we have Lovell's stick, which Carthew also recognises. You see, the evidence will not bear denial. Your best course is open confession. In that case, I might be able to deal more leniently with you."

"I have only one thing to say, sir," said Jimmy Silver steadily.

"And what is that?"

"The evidence may be black, but it is false. I do not know how it came in our boxes, or how Lovell's stick came to be used, and then hidden in our study. But we are innocent!"

"Enough! I had hoped that you were speaking the truth; no purpose is served by such obstinacy at this time! Have you anything to say with regard to the charge against you, Lovell?"

"Only what Jimmy has just said. We're all innocent, sir!" said Lovell grimly.

"Raby?"

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood, angered by the persecution of Mark Carthew, a bullying prefect of the Sixth, form a secret organisation called the Fascist Band of Rookwood. In due course, Carthew and his cronies are given the ragging of their lives, the Fascists being careful to cover up their tracks by electing only a few of their numbers to act on each occasion.

Later, Lattrey bumps into Captain Punter, a rascally book-maker, who expounds a scheme to get Jimmy Silver & Co. expelled from Rookwood. Unable to pay his debts, Lattrey is forced to fall in with the rascal's wishes, with the result that Carthew is found shortly afterwards lying stunned in a nearby lane. A grim discovery in the shape of a stick with bloodstains on the head, points to Lovell as being the guilty party, and the Fourth-Former is accordingly placed under suspicion, together with his chums, who are accused of aiding him.

(Now read on.)

"The same, sir!"
 "Newcome?"
 "We know nothing about Carthew, sir!"
 "Very good! You are foolish, but you must adhere to your story if you wish. It does not alter my decision."
 "Give us time, sir—" began Jimmy Silver desperately.
 "We'll find the real culprit, if you'll hold over your decision, sir!" broke in Lovell.
 Mr. Dalton's face lightened a little, but the Head shook his head slowly.

There was a streak of obstinacy in Dr. Chisholm's kindly nature. It was aroused now by what he considered a foolish adherence to what had been proved a prevarication. His mind was made up.

"I am sorry, Silver! I have always held the highest opinion of you, but my duty is plain! You and your friends will leave this school by the first train to-morrow morning! Lovell will be flogged publicly in Hall first!"

"But, sir, you must listen—" "I am under no such compulsion!" snapped the Head, with a heightening of colour. "I have listened to as much as I deem necessary! There is no room for young hooligans in a school such as Rookwood. That is all!"

Jimmy Silver, his fists clenched and his eyes gleaming, took a step towards the doctor's desk.

Lovell took a step also. But Bulkeley stepped forward and swept the junior captain back, and Mr. Dalton took Lovell by the shoulder.

In dead silence the Fistical Four were escorted from the Head's study to the punishment-room, there to await their fate on the morrow morning.

Expulsion—disgrace for life—that was what the scheming of Captain Punter and his accomplice in the Fourth had engineered as a reward for the raggings he had received at the hands of the Fistical Four.

It was the captain's hour of triumph—and for Mark Lattrey, worry and fear preying on his conscience day and night.

That night the Fistical Four slept, despairingly enough, in the punishment-room. And Lattrey, safe in the Fourth Form dormitory, tossed miserably with the knowledge that was his.

Kit Erroll rolled over in his bed in the Fourth Form dormitory, and yawned and rubbed his eyes.

He stared as his gaze fell upon Valentine Mornington, the only junior stirring among the Fourth.

It was early; rising-bell was not due for another half-hour. Yet Mornington was astir and nearly dressed.

He nodded to Erroll, lacing his shoes swiftly.

"Cheerio, old bean! Did I startle you?"

"Fathead! What are you getting up for?"

Mornington's face set a little.

"Don't you remember what's on this morning?"

"My hat, yes! But what—"

Erroll gave him a very keen glance.

This morning was the last that the Fistical Four were to spend at Rookwood. After breakfast there was to be a flogging for Lovell in Hall, and then Mr. Dalton would see the four juniors off at the station.

Expelled! That was the sentence that had taken all Rookwood by storm. Jimmy Silver & Co., the leaders of the junior school, convicted of a dastardly exploit and condemned to leave the school!

The Head believed he was doing right—indeed, to his eyes the whole affair was plain enough. Whether Mr. Dalton agreed with him was not certain, but, in any case, it did not matter. The Head's decree had gone forth, and the Fistical Four were expelled.

In the Fourth there was terrific indignation on every side. But the tongues of Peele and Gower and Lattrey and fellows of their kidney were at work, and the seeds of doubt were growing in many breasts. After all, you never knew a fellow till you found him out.

But in the hour of doubt and trial Jimmy Silver & Co. still had a band of faithful chums, and among these Mornington and Erroll figured. For some reason Mornington was astir long before rising-bell. And Kit Erroll could not help suspecting that it had something to do with the Fistical Four.

"Look here, Morny. If you've thought of anything to help Jimmy—"

"You've hit it, dear man!"

"Then I'm with you. Wait a tick while I slip on my clobber."

(Don't miss the continuation of this grand serial next week.)

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